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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LINE AND LABYRINTH: A STUDY OF TEMPORALITY AND THE CURRICULUM

BY

JOHN HOYT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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In teaching, you have people who haven't come to the Waste Land yet. They're at the point of making the decision whether they're going to follow the way of their own zeal--the star that's dawned for them--or do what daddy and mother and friends want them to do. The adventure is always in the dark forest, and there's something perilous about it. . . . . [Yet] in order to have something new, something old has to be broken; and if you're too heavily fixed on the old, you're going to get stuck. That's what hell is: the place of people who could not yield their ego system to allow the grace of a transpersonal power to move them. (Joseph Campbell An Open Life 66-7)

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SUBMITTED BY JOHN HOYT
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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This work is dedicated to Carolyn, who encouraged me to begin the journey, and to Jan, who served as a guide and companion along the way.

To "Meagan" I would like to offer an expression of deep appreciation for her willingness to share her most personal thoughts, as well as a word of encouragement as she continues her own journey.

LINE AND LABYRINTH:
A STUDY OF TEMPORALITY AND THE CURRICULUM

ABSTRACT

This study of the relationship between time and the curriculum is rooted in the author's personal encounter with the disjuncture between linear myths which continue to dominate Western educational paradigms and the body-/earth-centered alinearity of our earliest temporal experience.

Chapter one, an introduction to the study, discusses the centrality of time in human experience and establishes its relationship to the curriculum.

Chapter two is a critical analysis of the linear model, and suggests that Western myths of history and progress have cut us off from a more fundamental understanding of time in which human experience was once rooted.

Chapter three considers the labyrinth as a model of the more body-centered, "lunar" dimension of time which holds the power to restore our lost connection with the earth.

In chapter four, the disparity between line and labyrinth is explored in the lives of two students whose personal experience of time is in disharmony with the official myths embodied in the curriculum.

Chapter five explores the possibility of a labyrinthine curriculum, one in which time is once again understood as a living relationship with body and earth.

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Line and Labyrinth:
A Study of Temporality and the Curriculum

Chapter 1: The Meaning of Time

I. Introduction

> The concept of time's arrow shot into eternity symbolizes for many people the feeling of the irreversibility of fate and the hasty agitation of life that devours man minute after minute. Time is for them the moving river that drags us all to an unknown future.
>
> . . . .
>
> Especially in Hindu symbolism, time is portrayed as a placid, silent pool within which ripples come and go. The ripples are our temporary lives from which we must go down into the great, eternal Nirvana. (Meerloo 248)

Though our personal experience of time may vary throughout our lives, ranging from placid pool to raging torrent, for each of us time forms a warp through which we attempt to articulate the weft of our lives, forming a fabric of accumulated experiences in which we try to find a meaningful pattern. This image of the "warp" of time suggests, appropriately enough, an element of randomness, of hazard; from the same root as the modern German *werfen*, the warp (from the Old English *weorpan*, to throw) is "thrown" across the loom, it is the random given, the throw of the dice, with which the weaver must contend. As existential philosophy suggests, we are *thrown* into a world: the time and place of our birth, our genetic make-up, our very existence, seem the product of an obscure chance.[1] Yet because such imagery evokes as well the eventual emergence of pattern, of order and beauty, it serves as a reminder that our experience of living-in-time is a creative process, an encounter with chaos which gives birth to meaning.

While suggesting that each of us seeks a measure of order and meaning while weaving-through the givenness of the temporal warp, a third factor inevitably shapes the final pattern as well. Our encounter with a social order, as brought to the young child by means of the curriculum, imposes its own measure of control on the weaving process. This encounter begins with our first experience of language, as we are taught to shape the amorphous fluff of our desires into discrete filaments through the process of naming.

This study of time and the curriculum will attempt to bring into perspective these three aspects of our temporal weaving, in particular from the standpoint of teachers and students: the seemingly random givenness of being, the mystery of our thrownness into a world; our personal liberty, the element of choice and control which we bring to our own life and learning; the structuring which has been imposed on reality through the choices of others. Not easily distinguished from the first, the imposed structuring of this third aspect is often taken to be as inevitable and predetermined as our genetic background or the time and place of our birth. Yet a reconsideration of the Origin and Ends of this structuring will, it is hoped, lead teachers, and through them their students, toward the possibility of a more consciously personal participation in the weaving of temporal meaning.

The Voracity of Time

> What then, is time? If no one asks me, I know. If I wish to explain it to someone who asks, I know it not. (Augustine *Confessions*; Book XI, sec. 14)

The experience of time is an essential and fundamental aspect of human existence; it is, in a sense, the fabric of life itself. Yet in spite of this, time is distinctly enigmatic, as Augustine recognizes. It is a simple matter to point to the cycles of sun and moon, to sundials and clocks, in an effort to define time. Yet these commonly accepted "definitions" of time, grounded on the movement of physical objects (the earth, a shadow, the hands of a clock), simply suggest the absence of a more fundamental definition. More meaningfully, I can reflect on my personal experience of time. Though modern physics, for example, offers images of elastic time and time-space grids which appeal to the imagination, it denies the popular conception of time as a river-like flow.[2] Yet while my experience may correspond to no physical reality, it insists nonetheless on the importance of this traditional, deceptively simple image: the *flow* of time, like Marc Chagall's painting of time as a "river that has no banks," through which I, as a fairly practiced swimmer, must make my way. Each day I move through this transparent stream, unaware of the current until suddenly the water and my ability to swim are called into question.

Suddenly, I panic, feeling much as I felt one day while swimming alone in a lake: too far from shore to stand, I knew that my life depended on my ability to swim, yet suddenly conscious of the depth of the water and of the fact that *I* was the swimmer, I found that my skills, once taken for granted, had vanished.

So too, on occasion, I become aware of time, of its depth, and of my solitude as a swimmer and, in panic, feel that I am about to go under. Unlike the tranquil lake, at such moments time does indeed seem to be a river, pounding over me, wearing down and washing away all that is familiar. On these occasions I am acutely aware of the leveling effects of time, of time as entropy, cruel master of a universe where one day every light must blink out. Even in my calmest, most rational moments, apparently swimming easily and certainly, my awareness of time as a constant flux serves to temper any temptation to see my existence as a timeless, permanent "now."

My experience of time, then, is that of change: in my body, in the bodies of my spouse, children, friends, in the familiar objects that surround me. While some of this change is for the better, ultimately, it would seem, *all* of it is for the worse. Children are born, houses built, books written, planets and stars created, yet just as these things have a beginning, so too they must have an end: my own death would seem to be as inevitable as that of the world, the solar system, our galaxy, until finally the entire universe must collapse in an exhausted whimper. Though philosophy and physics may call familiar notions of time into question, this primordial human experience must remain unchallenged: the time which we seek to claim as our own, in which we live, work, and plan, is a short, bright line on a vast, inscrutable spectrum; a present bordered by an infinite past of which we have no memory and a boundless future which knows nothing of our hopeful plans.

Perhaps not surprisingly, an occasional well-intentioned critic suggests that my assessment of time is negative in the extreme, that only an irremediably morbid personality would overlook the fact that time lends itself to play and celebration as well as to struggle and work. This study will affirm, however, that if we are to enter into a fuller appreciation of the positive aspects of temporal experience we must first reassess the negative implications of our obsessive structuring of time. This structuring, which (in a world dominated by the arbitrary rhythm of the clock) begins the moment we draw our first breath, has (as this study will seek to show) cut us off from a full appreciation of the meaning of time, and has contributed to the sense of isolation and abandonment which is so often an important aspect of our experience of the world.

To dwell exclusively on the cheerful aspects of time is, I believe, to deny the implications of our traditional emphasis on order, progress, and control. Our unwillingness to face the limits of this control has resulted in a general denial of the meaning of the finitude of our ultimate past and future; thus it is not particularly surprising that those who point to the need to consider this finitude are sometimes thought to be either gratuitously morbid or perhaps even in some sense pathological. I would suggest, however, that a reconsideration of the implications of our temporal existence, of the meaning of the past and future, will transform what often seems to be a black hole into a restorative vision of a temporal whole.

The Origin of School-Time

As human beings, necessarily aware (if often only dimly) of our own mortality, our mode of existence in the world may be seen as a response to this awareness; though the modern ego seems to grow increasingly complex, though we pride ourselves on our clear-minded rationality, our response to the perceived threat of time seems to have a decidedly irrational flavor, and might best be characterized as a series of variations on the ancient "fight-flight" motif.[3] In my compulsive consumerism, for example, I note one variation on this theme: through my purchases I am, perhaps like Shelley's Ozymandias, attempting to erect a lasting monument to my own name, to mark my passage through the world with an impressive accumulation of power symbols.[4] This new object, a recently acquired house or car, becomes an extension of my ego, and I begin to be involved closely with it in a relation of watchful concern, lest it too begin to show signs of impermanence. At the same time, my absorption in the accumulation and protection of such objects in itself serves to dull the edge of my anxiety and seems to give my life a sense of meaning. I find in my own experience a tendency to treat other valuable "possessions" in the same way: my wife, my children, my students are carefully tended, watched over, too often not with their best interest in mind. Rather, my efforts to control others seem to offer both a measure of forgetting (through busy involvement) and an enhancement of my own sense of meaningfulness and permanence, a confirmation of my ability to manipulate the world to my advantage. Finally, of course, I need a sense of control over my most basic "possession" of all, the fabric of life itself, my time. Perhaps nothing causes greater anxiety on the routine, day-to-day level, than unexpected demands on my carefully budgeted daily fund of time.

It is against this dark background that all human efforts at world-building must be understood.[5] All our institutions, religious, political and social, may (as this study will suggest) be seen as an act of defiance in the face of entropy/death, a tangible expression of the reassuring myths which affirm that, unlike plants and animals, we are somehow distinct from the world, not fully at home in a realm of mortal beings; an acknowledgement of the absurdity of the human condition, the paradox of a transcendent spirit chained to a mortal body. The curriculum will, in the course of this study, be considered as a prime example of such world-building. The institution of the school (as I have experienced it) serves both as a distraction from the anxiety caused by an unmediated confrontation with our mortality and as a lasting monument to the civilization of which we understand ourselves to be a part. Thus it is of some interest to note the parallel between the temporal structuring which lies at the root of the "modern" curriculum--which I will refer to in this study as "school-time"--and the rise of the "ego," that ambivalent entity which is the product of the widening split between the human spirit and the world which surrounds it.[6]

It is often suggested that the experience of existence as a human being implies a measure of temporal understanding, that the earliest *homo sapiens* was characterized in part by the dawning of an awareness of time. Evidence for such an awareness is ascribed, for example, to the ability to make tools and create works of art, as well as to the practice of burying the dead.[7] Yet this primordial experience of time would have been rather different from that of human beings in developed societies today; just as I can dimly recall an epoch in my own life where time was experienced as a seemingly endless round of daily and seasonal cycles, so I can imagine that in this edenic age in the distant past time was understood in terms of the ageless rhythms of nature (of which we still felt ourselves to be a part). In such a world, time was abundant; and though human beings had an understanding of their own finitude, death--rather than the ultimate catastrophe that it seems to have become today--was but one important motif in the vast tapestry of being.

As that which we call the ego has become progressively more conscious of itself and its distinctness from its surroundings, however, the sensuous nature of our original participation in the world has been replaced by an awareness of our homelessness and alienation. It has been suggested that a clear understanding of the self as an isolated entity, distinct from its environment, generally crystallizes around the age of two and a half years, and is today often assumed to be a criterion of "normal" intellectual development.[8] Yet, though we understandably prefer to point to the intellectual gains which we have made over our pre-literate forbears, the emergence of the ego (which seems to have assumed its present form around the time of the Renaissance) has radically altered--by no means solely for the better--our relationship with the world of nature, and thus our understanding of time as well.

No longer immersed in the rhythms of nature, human beings now have the power to stand apart from and analyze her workings; yet this new-found power is indeed purchased at a price. The ego which is able to analyze and act upon the world, to manipulate the environment to his own advantage, finds as well that his former personal relationship with the cosmos has been lost. Time, which he once experienced as the ebb and flow of the boundless sea of being, is now carefully measured, ever in short supply; hence the need to impose a growing measure of temporal structure and control. We are told, for example, that the early Greeks kept no records of the performance of their athletes; winning the race was of the utmost importance, but the actual time elapsed during a race was not recorded.[9] This is explained only in part by a lack of technical expertise: the ability to measure the passage of time was poorly developed, of course, but though distances could be measured (for the javelin throw, for example) they were not recorded either. More convincingly, it could be argued that time was experienced as a "now," and that distinctions between past, present, and future were not clearly developed; time (like space) was not yet as fully structured as it is today, not yet understood as a quantifiable commodity of which careful account must be taken.

Thus as we read Plato's dialogues we may attempt to imagine an early Greek "classroom" as well: relatively unstructured both spatially and temporally, a place where people come together at will to discuss, and break off when the parties involved agree to do so, when the discussion seems to have reached a satisfactory conclusion, or when both parties concede that further individual reflection is required. The dialogues, of course, generally present a rather atypical picture of Greek education which might more closely parallel the unstructured conversations which I have with fellow-classmates in a seminar or during a coffee-break at the University. Plato writes from within a society where much of the child's education (assuming, of course, that he was a born to a member of the literate elite) was in fact rather structured, though certainly not as closely regulated by Text and Clock as is that of children today.[10]

Time and Text

Our brief consideration of the earliest human experience of time seems to suggest that the gains inherent in the development of the modern ego were accompanied by loss as well. Though it is necessarily rather difficult to trace the origins of our educational system back to its pre-literate roots, both archeology and mythology suggest that in the archaic world--where time was measured in terms of the rhythms of body and earth--humans still felt a degree of identity with rocks, plants, and animals. The oral traditions which constituted the community's fund of knowledge would, then, have been a product of this identity, a living text which emerged from an encounter with a time and place.

Rather than the passive acquisition of information which has no apparent bearing on the student's daily life, learning, too, would have arisen from a sensuous relationship with the earth. Because each student was a participant in the community's interaction with the network of beings (animals, plants, the earth herself) which gave life its meaning, the experience of each was valued for its potential contribution to the common store of knowledge, the emerging mythos which shaped the temporal self-understanding of the entire community.[11] In such a context there was, of course, no "school-time" at all: rather than the rigid structuring of the hours and minutes which has come to characterize Western education (and which mirrors our traditional myths of conquest and dominion), this community would have shared a sense of temporality grounded in a respect for the ephemerality of existence and a recognition of the limits of human control.[12]

Because of this understanding of time, the archaic world was an enchanted shrine, a place where human beings felt themselves to be a part of the temporal rhythms of the cosmos. Just as their bodies pulsed to the phases of the moon and community festivals followed the seasons of the earth, so their understanding of education grew from an experience of a time and place. School-time, however, is a product of an ego which has turned away in fear from reminders of its own contingency (which are inherent in the ancient rhythms of nature) and sought refuge behind the massive walls it has erected; rejecting the "myths" of ancient tradition, we have made of our own myths the unyielding, inerrant Text which grounds today's curriculum. In place of the writable text of archaic traditions (where knowledge grew from the interaction of personal vision and community wisdom), the curriculum as most of us experience it today is decidedly readable, the product of a few acknowledged "experts" which the student must accept as a given.[13]

Thus it is essential, if we are to come to a revitalized understanding of our place in time, to reconsider as well our relationship to the text. Archaic communities recognized the value of local mythologies, and understood their role in the process of education. These "road-maps" offered the student an indication of her point of origin and final destination, a hint of the obstacles which line the path, and a suggestion of creative ways in which these obstacles may be met.[14]

Today's world has, of course, by no means banished mythology. On the contrary, traditional Western mythologies, while they have been challenged by modern science, continue to form the foundation on which our curriculum rests. Yet while archaic traditions acknowledged the spatial and temporal limitations of local myths, our tradition has demanded universal recognition and insisted on its own inerrancy and immutability. As chapter two will show more clearly, these claims have become increasingly untenable; though astronomy, quantum physics, paleozoology (to name but a few) have begun to offer us the raw material for a new generation of myths, our approach to education has failed to prepare us to embark on a search for temporal meaning, one which would enable students to evaluate and assimilate these unsettling images of our place in the cosmos. Because our curriculum lacks the creative insight of archaic traditions, the void left by the gradual passing of our foundational myths is quickly being filled by the ready-made fictions of popular culture, while on the institutional level, the lifeless husk of our mythological tradition continues its efforts to shape students' thoughts. Thus the curriculum itself might best be understood as an ideological text which molds our interpretation of the world, defining for both students and teachers that which may be meaningfully considered to be "knowledge"; as such, it sometimes explicitly, though more often implicitly, mediates students' temporal self-understanding, offering an imposed vision of their place and time which denies their own creative potential (and often conflicts with their experience of the world as well).

In this study, then, I will be seeking a transitional curriculum, one which will lead us from the rigidity and anthropocentrism of linear myths which underlie the curriculum as we experience it today, toward the decentered diversity of the new. Indeed, as subsequent chapters will suggest, this transition is already well underway. Linear myths once offered students a clear, reassuring image of their relationship with the world. The failure of these myths to penetrate the hearts and minds of today's students has led many thoughtful educators to conclude that our society has entered a period of profound crisis. This study will consider the causes and ramifications of the decline of our mythological heritage, and will suggest that this "crisis" be understood as an opportunity for the creative reformulation of the curriculum, one which will be guided by the neglected insights of archaic, non-linear traditions. While this search will begin with a thoughtful, invigorating return to the past, its ultimate goal is, of course, a clearer and richer vision of the future. Our students have a fundamental role to play in the search for such a vision, this study will affirm, one for which our passive, decontextualized approach to the text has failed to prepare them.

As a cautionary note, I might perhaps acknowledge my selective and somewhat "poetic" use of the historical record. While I have carefully researched and documented my work, much of the material which I find to be of greatest value is, of necessity, somewhat speculative in nature. The writings of those who point to the creativity, tolerance, and wisdom of archaic societies have admittedly elicited a wide range of critical response, yet this study will affirm that there is, indeed, a large measure of truth in accounts which suggest that in pre-technological societies the split between subject and object, "ego" and "world," was less pronounced; that knowledge was more fully grounded in a living relationship with the earth; and that the "learning" which results from an encounter between student and text was rooted in a more dynamic, interactive process through which both were transformed. Though many of these speculations lie beyond the pale of absolute certainty, the value of such theorizing must be sought in its ability to challenge the rigidity of the myths which we often take for granted, and, finally, to point us toward a creative vision for the future.[15]

Thus our search must follow a winding and perhaps dangerous path not unlike that of the ancient vision quest (to be further explored in chapter five). This quest begins as we renounce familiar images and enter the emptiness of the wilderness. Here, we seek to rediscover our first memories of time, moving backward toward the darkness of the Origin.

Because the concept of the Origin is central to my study of time and the curriculum, its meaning must be considered briefly at this point. My understanding of this term is deeply personal, mythological, and somewhat mystical as well, and is thus in sharp contrast with the search for a historical event which characterizes the linear approach (as chapter two will show). It includes the repertory of stories which we have been told about the beginnings of things (the formless void which preceded creation; the unimaginable moment before the beginning of time in the Big Bang, the nothingness of existence before our conception). Yet this Origin represents as well a time which we can, to a degree, enter in the present, via a "ritual return to the origin" (Eliade 30) which is a common concept in archaic traditions. Archaic medical praxis, for example, acknowledges that the power of healing lies only in this Origin:

> The therapeutic efficacy of the incantation [a ritual seeking cure for a toothache, for example] lies in the fact that, recited ritually, it re-enacts the mythical time of "origins," not only the origin of the world but also that of toothache and its treatment.
>
> . . . We get the impression that for archaic societies life cannot be repaired, it can only be re-created by a return to sources. (Eliade 30)

This "dream time" is the silent void which may be approached in a variety of ways (particularly in ritual and meditation), and is the source of healing and personal creative power alike, as chapter five will show.[16] As we reestablish our original connection with the temporal rhythms of body and earth, a new, more deeply personal vision of the meaning of time will gradually begin to emerge. Yet, as in archaic traditions, this personal vision both arises from and contributes to a community's memory of its ultimate connectedness to every filament of the vast web of being.

The object of this quest is thus by no means the total negation of the Western mythological tradition. It is, rather, a search for a measure of balance in a world which, as this study will show, has come to be dominated by masculine metaphors of control, progress, and conflict. If equilibrium is to be restored to what I would suggest has become a disturbingly one-sided curriculum, we must begin to understand that other, less "rational," forms of knowledge have an important role to play in the revitalization of our moribund tradition. With the passing of the monolithic text which once grounded our institutions, we have come to find ourselves cast adrift, erring in a decentered cosmos. A study of archaic traditions will suggest, however, the possibility of reclaiming the spiral path as a central curricular metaphor. Thus, rather than a broad, linear highway, the curriculum might better be understood (as chapter three will show more clearly) as a narrow, winding labyrinth, whose serpentine corridors--symbol of womb and tomb alike--serve as a constant reminder of the ultimate meaning of time.

The Ambivalence of Order

It might be argued that a departure from the relatively unstructured disposition of time which would characterize an early literate society is a necessity if education is to be made truly "democratic," accessible to all; yet the rigidity of today's classroom and of the Text which governs it must, I would suggest, be reexamined and understood for what it is: a rejection of a creative, dynamic, and tolerant model of knowledge which sees the world as a place where human beings may enjoy an essentially meaningful, spiritual existence with other beings, in favor of an inflexible, anthropocentric model which takes "Man" as the measure of all things, the being who at last has the power to bring Order out of the previously chaotic world of nature.[17] The "progress" of this rejection may be convincingly traced through history; the steps in this process are without exception ambivalent. Inventions such as writing and printing, radio and television (not to mention telescopes, microscopes, and radiometric clocks), have without doubt expanded our temporal horizons, necessitating in the process a revision of the curriculum; yet while they have allowed our minds to range more freely and deeply backward and forward in time, they have also tended to close and canonize knowledge, making us increasingly dependent on the will of the Author, a metaphorical Father who--in a world which defines itself as "modern," "enlightened," the realm of the "rational individual"--has taken the place of the gods of folklore and superstition.[18] Though many of us may enjoy the shelter of his comfortingly structured version of Reality, a failure to critically reexamine the nature of this structure and its effects on our temporal self-understanding will mean that our minds and bodies are inevitably shaped according to his will. Our flight to the certainty of the closed Text has resulted in our enslavement to a narrow focus on the Useful; open, dynamic forms of knowledge are either rejected altogether or tamed and made to do useful work within the school-time edifice.

The Platonic/Socratic "classroom" must appear today, even more than it did at the time of its conception, to be a sort of romantic ideal, several steps up from the chaos and barbarism which our tradition has taught us to see in the pre-historical world, no doubt, but certainly not a model to which prospective teachers are encouraged to aspire. Most of us would wait in vain for our students to appear; with no sense of discipline, of a pre-determined number of pages to cover in the text or of a pre-determined number of minutes to be spent in doing so, the authority of the teacher would be greatly diminished, and if school-time is disrupted at the whim of the teacher most of our better students would probably feel cheated as well, as my own experience affirms.

Returning in 10th grade to a small, multigrade classroom in Southern California, the contrast with my previous year's experience of the rigors of a classroom in central England was striking. The British classroom was the picture of discipline, the material for each day was covered quickly and efficiently, according to a schedule established far in advance. Traveling with my parents for a year in Europe, a 9th-grader thrown into a Form Three classroom (in a school near London) for three months, I found that I had broken in on a unit in geometry for which I had insufficient preparation. Yet, though for several weeks I was on the edge of despair, once I had (with my mother's help) filled in the missing background material I began to love the rigors of the logical demonstrations and precise drawings. I came to enjoy geometry and felt I was rather good at it (the rigors of school-time also reward those who are able to fulfill its demands). Back home in the U.S. the next year, geometry continued, but teaching methods could hardly have been more different. The teacher, a kind and experienced man, was nonetheless no mathematician, and was more at home on the baseball diamond or volleyball court; though we did in fact learn some geometry, he often devoted much of the class period to speculative, sometimes rather mystical discussions on the meaning of life, space-time implications of the new physics, black and white holes, etc., discussions which were invariably tinged with the religious overtones of his metaphysical speculations. At first, though I found the discussions interesting, they seemed to me to be an inappropriate substitute for the geometry which I had come to love. In general, though this teacher was in many ways a respected and appreciated father-figure, especially for the adolescent boys he taught through the years (he also taught us Bible, PE, health, and perhaps other subjects as well), I felt that the academic content of his classes left much to be desired. Feeling that I probably knew more geometry that he did, there were times when I had little respect for his teaching abilities.

In retrospect, however, I have begun to reevaluate his approach, and to see these utterly diverse teaching styles in a new light. I do not wish to minimize the importance of geometry and other academic subjects: perhaps we were not being given the academic background we and our parents might have expected. Yet this was one of the few teachers in my experience who was willing to rupture school-time, to help his students lay a foundation for creative personal thinking on the ultimate meaning of life. This teacher seems to have realized intuitively something which I have only recently begun to grasp: that school-time is much more than a mere structuring of the day for the convenience of teachers and students.

A Cave of Illusions

School-time, as I hope to examine it in this study, represents an all-encompassing experience of temporality, one which molds our self-understanding in a present which is grounded on the past and projected toward a future. Ultimately, I would suggest, school-time constitutes the foundation for our closed model of the curriculum, which in turn becomes the authoritative canon which provides for every aspect of the student's existence, the all-encompassing Text offering a model of self-understanding through its mediation of the both the past and the future, of which the spatio-temporal structuring of a school day or class period is but one manifestation.

School-time brings us "in from the cold," providing an appearance of secure shelter from the merciless assault of entropy. School-time offers protection, security, and freedom from our dark, troubling thoughts. School-time offers rest, dreamless sleep, and in exchange for our disturbing dreams comforts us with its own vision of a useful, ordered world. School-time has, for today's students, become the equivalent of a huge shopping mall which seems to function in much the same manner as Plato's cave of illusions. Protected from the heat of the sun and darkness of the night, most of us have forgotten that this shelter was itself constructed by human beings, that there is an infinite sky above the vault of its roof, and real dirt beneath the astroturf and linoleum at our feet.[19]

If school-time is to be better understood, then, we must begin to see the more sinister aspects of what may appear to be simply a convenient structuring of the school day. This systematic control of students' daily activities may more meaningfully be understood as a microcosm of the ordering of students' lives and of their temporal self-understanding under the Text of school-time. The typical class period constitutes a closed Text, one where "whys" are laid aside in favor of the more serviceable "hows," where only a very narrow range of questions may be meaningfully asked. The primordial Arche and Telos[20] of the period are utterly obscured by the demands of the Text--the period begins with a review of the previous day's work and ends with an assignment for tomorrow--we are learning math (reading, etc.) because it is prescribed by the Text, while the ultimate meaning of our busy involvement must remain unquestioned. Not surprisingly, then, the typical product of such a system will live a life having a similarly narrow, utilitarian focus. My experience has shown that many thoughtful students do their most creative, dynamic work, work which points the way toward an authentically temporal understanding of existence, outside the structured time of the classroom. For students such as these, the comfort and shelter of the school-time mall has become a fun house gone wrong, an endless hall of mirrors in which they are daily offered grimacing, barely recognizable images of themselves. As the world which the Text proposes as its image of ultimate Reality comes into conflict with the freedom and creativity of their inner vision, many of these students are, in a sense, driven underground, into a schizophrenic existence. The contribution of those students who choose to pursue this vision thus remains relatively unappreciated, shared at most among a small circle of acquaintances.

My experience further suggests that there is a second, much larger group of students who also sense the unreal, sometimes nightmarish quality of the school-time edifice. Yet these students have generally not begun to develop the inner resources which might lead them to a personal restructuring of reality. Unwilling or unable to participate fully in what seems to be a series of surrealistic arcade games, yet equally unwilling to break completely with the comforting world-picture offered them by school-time, these students continue to tread the endless institutional corridors, while finding a measure of meaning and individual identity ready-made in the mythologies of popular culture.

Finally, of course, many of those whom we consider to be our "best" students appear happy enough to accept the world-picture offered them by school-time, to cultivate the shallow, instrumental mentation which it promotes as "rational thinking." Understandably, they are content to bask in the cheery warmth of an artificial sun, to relax on the shores of man-made oceans, freed from uncertainties, from the darkness and nightmares of earth and sky. Yet many of these students, too, have begun to suspect that the structure is not wholly sound, to note that disturbing noises can at times be heard, perhaps the occasional discordant voices of those who have rejected this vision of the world and been consigned to forgotten passages of the edifice; at times it seems that perhaps even the mechanisms which light the sky and drive the waves have become frighteningly audible. If a few students and teachers have heard and begun to welcome these sounds, feeling that they offer the opportunity to draw attention to the doubtful foundation which underlies the entire structure, experience would seem to suggest that those with a close involvement in the workings of the school-time edifice will be the last to understand that which has become obvious to many others: that while such an edifice may indeed serve a useful purpose, it does not in itself represent the only possible "correct" vision of the world.

Our consideration of an alternate, more open model of the curriculum will point to the possibility that even within this institutional labyrinth it is possible to find other forgotten "stories," personal levels of meaning which seem to provide more congenial living conditions for many, and that beyond its shelter there lies an earth and a sky, churning oceans and blazing fires. This is the chaotically beautiful, though disturbingly unpredictable, universe which the architects of school-time have attempted both to mimic and to redesign in their own image in their search for predictability and order.

The Positive Role of Chaos

There is, of course, no place for chaos in the classroom, or so student teachers are taught. Whatever the new teacher's subject matter qualifications, if she is unable to establish the order required by school-time she will be judged a failure. The ability to maintain and establish control in the classroom, the preparation of lesson plans that show a clear understanding of the direction which the official Text has prescribed, are important manifestations of this rejection of chaos. Yet the reflective teacher will also recognize that the experience of life is itself bordered by chaotic mysteries which constitute our existence as temporal beings; though students and teachers who are constantly confined by order may feel temporarily more secure, they will be unprepared to grasp creatively the meaning of chaos, and thus unable to live an authentically temporal present, one which is informed by the dark mysteries of our past and future nothingness. A creative personal encounter with the meaning of time will put into clear focus the Man-made character of the official Text, and open the classroom to an appreciation of alinear forms of knowledge which hold the key to the creation of individual (and eventually community) mythologies which, I would suggest, are indispensable to a meaningful existence.

The present study, then, proposes a reexamination of the temporal paradigm which underlies the curriculum as we experience it each day. This reexamination will be carried out with the recognition that it implies the necessity of an introspective self-examination as well. On a practical level, the proposed move toward a curriculum modeled on an authentic understanding of temporality--one which recognizes that each student has a role to play as the author of her own text--will imply the "teaching of thinking" in the most fundamental sense. Such a paradigm will ask of teachers the courage and skill to create a climate in which the temporal meaning of our habitual busy involvement may be thoughtfully reconsidered, where the fundamentality of our mortality is allowed to bring into focus the ephemerality and contingency of human world-building, and where the openness of poetic expression is once again (as it was in archaic traditions) valued as a meaningful form of knowledge. Such a study offers teachers an alternative vision of their task: rather than seeing the curriculum as the authoritative determiner of their relationship with their students, an authentically temporal consciousness and its creative, dynamic understanding of knowledge will suggest a collaborative form of education, one which emphasizes dialogue and places more value on the creative insights of the student. Such a model of education will necessarily appear rather limited: aware of the humbleness of its origins, mindful of the burden of responsibility entailed by the destructiveness of its more recent attempts at world-building, and open to the implications of its own ultimate finitude. It may in many respects appear rather subversive as well; compelled for the time being to work within a system of school-time to which it can give only limited support, it will be constantly testing the limits imposed by the curriculum.

On the other hand, because of this decision to work from within, the proposed model risks appearing to be in bad faith: willing to accept the shelter of a structure to which it is unwilling to give full support. Fittingly enough, it is at this point that I uncomfortably confront an image of myself, happy to accept the comforts of a system which affords me the luxury of making such a criticism, yet perhaps unwilling, even unable, to accept the ultimate implications of such thoughts. Writing as a member of a conservative, rather closely knit community, I must nonetheless be prepared to face the ambiguity of my status and to recognize that I run several very real risks. The most obvious, perhaps, to a reader who does not share my background is that my writing take the form of an ethnographical study of an exotic culture; of some immediate interest, perhaps, but offering few generalizable insights into the experience of education in North America.

Yet perhaps most threatening to me personally is the risk that I feel almost daily: that in daring to think potentially subversive thoughts, in daring to suggest that students look at the official Text in a new and more open way, I have embarked on a course which is intrinsically self-defeating, one which, if it succeeds, will leave me and my colleagues with the prospect of facing an empty classroom. Yet, though public school teachers may have the security of knowing that their students will continue to be legally obliged to sit in their classrooms, can they afford the luxury of denying that the artifice of school-time must bear some, perhaps much, of the responsibility for the present condition of a world which at times seems to be crumbling around us? Can they fail to recognize that their students, too, are seeking an understanding of existence which the official curriculum seems unable to provide?

As a part of my study I must face such limitations, realizing that my own experience of the world will inevitably colour any research which I attempt, even that which pretends to be most "objective," yet hoping that my critique of a system and society which I must claim as an essential element of my own origin will not be misunderstood. A life-time of experience in a religiously-oriented community leaves me convinced that the spiritual dimension of temporal experience will be an essential aspect of any attempt to move beyond the "shopping mall" model of the curriculum which I have described. On the other hand, my experience of the public school system suggests that though the rigidities which I will note within my community are somewhat more pronounced and thus more easily identifiable than they would be in the setting of the public school, they are nonetheless not an atypical aberration. Writing from within such a community may, in fact offer the advantage of bringing into clear relief some of these rigidities which might otherwise escape notice.

II. Method

The methodology which will inform this study will be of an eclectically qualitative nature, drawing on the following resources:

a) The contribution to temporal self-understanding offered by existential and feminist philosophy, post-structuralist literary criticism, and traditional "mythological" texts.

b) An auto-biographical approach to insights arising from years of interaction with students in a variety of settings. Because I have not taken a leave of absence from my teaching duties (I continued, during the 1988-89 school year, to teach art to students ranging from the seventh grade to college, a college-level course in art teaching methods, and, more recently (1989-90), high-school English and French); this interaction is an on-going aspect of my study. I also have several years of experience teaching physical sciences (chemistry and physics, which I taught at a secondary school in French-speaking Africa from 1973-79).

c) A consideration of the stories of a few individual students.

This will, then, be an essentially theoretical study, yet one which is rooted in my interaction with the thoughts of a diversity of writers; in my own experiences as a student and teacher; and, perhaps most importantly, in my relationship with students (two students in particular, whose work--presented in chapter four--has served to illustrate and to develop the key insights of this study) and classmates (one classmate in particular, whose experience of time introduces chapter five).

I have, in this introductory chapter, pointed to a number of themes, each of which will, in the course of this study, be developed as a vital aspect of our understanding of time and the educational experience. In particular, I have alluded to our emerging understanding of time and the parallel development of the ego; to our relationship with the text (and thus with mythology and ideology); and to the importance of other, "non-linear" temporal paradigms in our search for a curriculum which will restore our connection with the earth from which linear time has cut us off. It will become clear to the reader that there are a number of related educational issues which have been hinted at, but not fully developed because of the constraints of time and space. A sampling of such issues (which could well be the subject of subsequent studies) might include:

Male-female relationships, in particular the question of men's misunderstanding of and violence toward women. This issue is implicit in my discussion of linear myths and the dominative relationship which they encourage toward the "other" (which, in Western thought, includes nature, woman, our own bodies, as well as our minds: the psychic shadows which darken the sunlit corridors of the "enlightened" ego);

Ecological concerns, which, though alluded to clearly in chapter five and hinted at throughout this study, might well be made a more central focus, particularly in the context of the classroom;

The future evolution of human consciousness. This is indeed an interesting topic, one which, though it is treated to some extent in the course of my consideration of the emergence and development of the ego (see in particular chapter two: I am Odysseus), suggests the possibility of further research and speculation. (See also chapter five, note two.)

The Ambivalence of Methodology

Having proposed that we reconsider our accepted understanding of what constitutes "knowledge," the consequences of this reconsideration must extend to the search for a methodology as well.[21] On the one hand, of course, there is a sense in which the notion of a Methodology is in itself misleading; in rejecting the hegemony of a manipulative scientific paradigm, it would be misguided, it seems, to exalt ethnographic and phenomenological methods to a similar position. Seeking an analogy, I am drawn to my experience of the practice and teaching of painting. Many teachers and students bring to their work the preconception that there is a "correct" way to paint, and their experience of art is thus guided by a search for Method. "How-to" manuals, painting lessons on television, and art displays in local shopping malls all encourage this approach. My personal experience has shown that, while technique is indeed a vital aspect of the creative process, it must never be allowed to dominate.

A more helpful understanding for the artist as well as for the researcher in the social sciences might suggest a participatory or "writable" methodology, similar to that which apparently once grounded traditional alchemy, as a paradigm for all research in the human sciences:

> it was central to the [alchemical] tradition that each student must learn this complex procedure by himself. There was no standardized recipe that could be handed on, but rather an elaborate practice that required a profound commitment. (Berman 79)

While the alchemist, artist, or researcher may indeed, as a part of her professional training, come to accept certain procedures which have shown their ability to facilitate the task at hand, these procedures will not be allowed to dictate the final form of the work as would a technique-oriented Methodology. Rather, both process and product are rooted in her experience of life and work: questions arise as a result of her commitment to her work, and research will become a quest for the possibility of a new understanding of her work as well as of her life. In my teaching, for example, daily contact with a student over several months suggests a new way of understanding myself, one which has implications for my mode of being-with others in the home or in the classroom, for my understanding of my place in the world, for my personal development as manifested in my writing or painting. (All of these facets of my life are, of course, inextricably interrelated.) Yet, though all educators would probably recognize that this is true, such knowledge is not in any fundamental sense communicable; I am generally as yet only dimly aware of the insight which this child or student has brought me.

Particularly in my high school and college teaching, however, I often have contact with an individual student over a period of a few years. I have found that as I develop a closer relationship with such students, discussing with them not only their work but also, from time to time, their daily experiences in the dormitory and classrooms, glimpsing their childhood memories, future plans, personal strengths and weaknesses, that deeper insights into the educational process emerge, insights which I become increasingly able to articulate and which suggest possibilities for further exploration. As they emerge, then, such insights necessarily shed new light on the meaning of the questions from which they arose, altering my original understanding of these questions and transforming my understanding of myself and my place in the world; in the home and classroom, studio and office. Such a methodology might correctly be called "writable" in the sense that it must itself remain open, dynamic, constantly re-defined by the active involvement of the researcher.

Thus, while rejecting the notion of a Methodology, it would seem equally proper to suggest a cautious, selective embracing of all methodologies, an approach which recognizes the complexity and diversity of the task of the educator and respects the multiplicity of voices which contribute to our understanding of this task.[22] I may well reject the manipulation of my students which seems to be an inherent aspect of quantitative methodologies; I may be extremely distrustful of the manner in which these methodologies conceal the inevitable subjective involvement of the researcher in the choice of questions and interpretation of results behind a mask of omnipotence and omniscience with which these methodologies pretend to endow the researcher.[23] Yet on occasion the use of or reference to such studies might well be justified. Though it may at times seem haphazard and opportunistic, the choice of a participatory approach to research would seem to suggest that, though we cannot simply return, romantically and naively, to more "primitive" and perhaps more wholesome ways of knowing, we can nonetheless attempt to evoke the multiplicity of knowledge, seeking a measure of tolerance toward the ways in which others have experienced the world.

In the initial stages of this study, as I began attempting to make of my daily experience of the classroom a sort of qualitative methodology, I became more keenly aware of the evolution and dynamics of the student-teacher relationship. In the course of each semester, certain individuals begin to stand out, to speak to special needs which I feel in my own life. While attempting to remain open to all my students, recognizing that many contribute insights which I will appreciate more fully with the passage of time, I necessarily feel a special relationship with these few. Yet as I began to come to a clearer understanding of the question which has motivated this study (in particular, toward the end of the 1987-88 school year), as I began to recognize in these few students an invaluable source of research material, my interaction with them began to take on vaguely manipulative overtones as well. Threatened by the imminent departure of a particularly unique student, for example, I began to make unusual requests: for journals, poetry, drawings, interviews. I was, of course, able to justify such requests in my own mind by reasoning that they arose from within the context of a relationship which had been developing over several months; yet questions nonetheless remained. Was the most prudent course a passive acceptance of material which students made available, or in the role of a researcher could I justify my urge to be more persistent, probing, hoping to unearth key insights as I began to flesh out the details of a life, yet at the same time risking discomfort and embarrassment, wondering whether I had perhaps taken something which the student ought not to have given? Should I request a structured interview with a student whom I knew only rather superficially, pressed to do so by the time constraints of my research? Should I attempt a telephone interview with a student (one whom I once knew well but who had moved away from the area a few months earlier), eager to develop the insights which she left me in drawings, poems and journals, yet realizing as well that ideally the acquaintance should first be renewed in a less structured setting? (Chapter four will show more clearly how these questions were ultimately resolved: in particular, by the reappearance of the student who had become the focus of much of my research after an absence of several months and by her willingness to contribute a quantity of deeply personal poetry and journals which documented her experience during a distictly unsettled semester.)

In affirming my respect for non-traditional, non-empirical ways of knowing, I have sought to develop a greater appreciation of a student's creative insights, while at the same time avoiding a subtle imposition upon this student of my personal vision; yet there were, no doubt times when I nonetheless asked her to pursue her own vision too quickly, too deeply, when I failed to take into account this individual student's level of psychological preparedness. The student-teacher relationship is an interaction, one which gives rise to insights which are necessarily owned jointly, and the extremes to which a one-sided vision of this interaction may lead--through the imposition of my own vision or pace on another, for example--are, in my experience, among the chief dangers inherent in such an application of qualitative methodologies.

In the fall of 1987, for example, I had begun encouraging my principal "informant" to explore, in a brief, unstructured, painting assignment, her personal fantasies relating to archaic religious experience (described in detail in her "self portrait" which introduces the biographical studies in chapter four). A few mornings later, however, I was rather taken aback when this student reported that she had had a terrifying dream (centered on the "druid" which she describes in the paragraph alluded to above) and was unable, for the time being, to continue this type of work.

Yet these dangers are perhaps to some extent unavoidable, and a recognition of their intrusion into the experience of teaching will in itself constitute an important aspect of this study.

Existentialism, Feminism, and Mythology

This document arises from questions regarding my own experience of the educational process and the ways in which this experience has impacted on (and often hindered) my efforts to develop a measure of temporal self-understanding. These questions have been brought into clearer focus by my recent reading of feminist theological writings and existential philosophy, both of which have suggested the pedagogical importance of a personal encounter with the meaning of time. This reading has suggested, in turn, the need for a curriculum whose emphasis on the importance of our foundational texts is tempered by a recognition that learning is an experience which requires a measure of freedom from the "technological" urge to control the Other and from our traditionally limited understanding of that which constitutes meaningful knowledge, as well as by an awareness of our own original and ultimate finitude.[24] To those readers who would demand an outright rejection of our philosophical tradition on the grounds that it represents a closed, ideologically motivated (ie. "readable"), text produced by a privileged few, I can only answer that though I, too, have become increasingly uncomfortable with the projects of philosophy as traditionally understood, I have nonetheless found many writers who have drawn on our philosophical tradition to provide insights which have led me towards a new understanding of my role as an educator.[25]

Rather than seeing in our tradition a seamless tapestry, a story of inevitable upward progression, these writers have found gaps, grafts, mismatched fabrics crudely stitched in place; reading their reexamination of this tradition I find traces of these grafts in the fabric of my own existence, and have come to recognize that such a reexamination points the way towards a process of healing. Philosophical research and reflection is clearly not a methodology which can be expected to stand by itself, but will be used to supply insights which will be used in conjunction with other phases of the study.

I have drawn much of the superstructure of my critique of the shallow, instrumental temporality of school-time from the writings of Martin Heidegger (Being and Time in particular); he suggests as well the need for an open, creative understanding of knowledge which will emerge from an authentic confrontation with our temporality. Meshing constructively with the writings of Heidegger, I have found that many feminist writers (Mary Daly, Charlene Spretnak, Rosemary Ruether, for example) make a real contribution towards a personal encounter with the meaning of time. Recognizing the spiritual dimensions of such an understanding, having experienced in their own lives the destructive impact of the traditional, closed (i.e. "patriarchal") curriculum and its technological orientation, these writers, though they do not necessarily speak specifically from the standpoint of educational praxis, bring a measure of dynamism and renewal to my own understanding of the educational process. As well, their insights seem to speak clearly to the needs of many students who have begun to share the feminist dissatisfaction with the patriarchal/technological world-picture. Their thoughts will thus be brought into interaction with my experiences and those of my students, placing these experiences in a larger format as well as setting them in their historical perspective.

As this study extends itself beyond the level of critique and begins to attempt a measure of synthesis, to seek a multiplicity of mythoi to guide the search for a renewed vision of the curriculum, it will perhaps necessarily stretch the limits of acceptable methodology as well. Besides the work of the above-mentioned "philosophers" and theorists, material from literary sources, both ancient and modern will be considered and contrasted with more recent and less recognized "fictions" in an attempt to see beyond, indeed to subvert, institutionalized modes of knowing. Ancient mythologies, for example, have begun to take on renewed significance for many of today's students who are looking for a more meaningful understanding of their origins than that offered by positivistic histories. Though for many this search may well have an "escapist" element, the tendency toward flight would seem in itself to point to a huge gap in the traditional curriculum which can only be bridged, I would suggest, by an active participation on the part of the student in the creative search for a personal mythos.

Autobiography

Even a casual reading of my dissertation to this point will suggest the centrality of autobiographical research to this study.[26] The autobiographical is, however, not merely another methodology. It must, rather, be understood as that which underlies all aspects of this work: an acknowledgement that I am personally involved in my writing, that any impact which this work may have on praxis will begin with a change in my own approach to teaching. The autobiographical begins with a recognition that our lives are shaped by an ideological framework, and constitutes an attempt to grasp the implications of this recognition. In particular, it calls for an awareness that this framework has guided the traditional Western approach to history. By imposing a seemingly rational, linear order on the past, it becomes possible to see the Self as a part of an intelligible pattern, an "integral member of a purposive totality" (Mark Taylor 154).

Traditional history, then, to the degree that it brings its patterns of purposive lawfulness to bear on our temporal self-understanding, implies a molding of the present and future as well; yet this molding requires a suppression of atypical, dissenting voices. The autobiographical, far from being a narcissistic emphasis on the importance of the self, seeks to show that (in our society) this self is an originally diffuse entity which is shaped by ideology into a "rational individual" who understands the meaning of his desires and "freely chooses" to satisfy these desires in a prescribed, lawful manner. The autobiographical would ask: Why His-tory? Why not rather her-story, my-story? in an attempt to show the grafts and gaps in what is sometimes portrayed as a monolithic, seamless temporal edifice. Thus the autobiographical is not restricted to a telling of "my" own story. Though the "researcher" will be constantly playing an interpretive role, the students who are involved in this study will be allowed as much as possible to tell their own stories, often in the non-discursive, "mythological" language of poetry, the plastic arts, and imaginative prose in which both students and researcher will seek to discern a pattern of meaningful implications.

If autobiography is perhaps not yet a typical, widely accepted methodology, the growing acceptance of qualitative studies has meant as well an increasing recognition that the denial of the autobiographical element, a denial which typifies classical quantitative methodology, is untenable. My personal history has guided my vision of the curriculum and my choice of a question; my increasing distance from my early experiences and growing awareness of similar experiences in the lives of others will, ideally, give broader significance to a personal archeology / astronomy.[27] As I attempt to look both below and beyond, below the astroturf and beyond the artificial sun of the school-time "mall" which was sketched earlier, as I seek a more authentic understanding of my personal past and future, insights will be sought which will impact on my own praxis, and hopefully on that of my colleagues as well.

The Voice of the Students

I have, then, attempted to outline a rather limited, though varied, range of methodologies which would seem to be appropriate to this study. Having taken as my goal the search for a renewed vision of the curriculum, one which is open to other sources and forms of knowledge and which is grounded on the human experience of temporality, I will allow a necessarily restricted number of perhaps quite atypical students to serve as specific instances, to bring into clearer focus the need which I, too, feel for the liberating potential of such a curriculum. If a justification for this approach is required, it might be pointed out that in a society where the technological, utilitarian model of the curriculum is the norm, educators who feel that this model is leading to an aporia will of necessity look first to the "typical" student, perhaps, for a broad sketch of the nature of the problem, but will be forced to look more closely and deeply for a new understanding of the past and vision for the future. An encounter with the lived-experience of even a very restricted number of real students will serve as a reminder that statistical methodologies are in no sense neutral, apolitical roads to Truth as our "human science" approach to research would pretend, but that they necessarily constitute an ideological concealing of individual differences in favor of the more pliable, utilitarian, will of the anonymous majority.[28] In particular, the student whom, because of her sullen disinterest, we might be tempted to overlook must be allowed to speak; even her silence and withdrawal will offer a measure of understanding into the ways in which the closed curriculum has failed in its attempt to communicate to her and to others like her, and will serve as a reminder that the "typical" student is in fact but a construct, an entity which exists only in the idealized world of those who are more interested in readily consumable "facts" than they are in the reality of the lives of students.[29]

My choice of methodologies needs a word of explanation as well, though I feel the preceding text makes my motivations clear enough. Emphasizing as I have the autobiographical aspect of my work, it might be noted that my choice of methodologies is also distinctly autobiographical, reflecting the varied nature of my personal education and teaching experience which range from several years study and teaching in the sciences (chemistry, physics, and statistics) to a more deeply personal focus on the arts and philosophy. Since many of the ideas which ground this discussion are rather abstract and philosophical in nature, it would be no doubt be tempting to leave my methodology on this level as well, avoiding embarrassing personal references and untidy, time-consuming work with students, allowing the reader to draw her own conclusions, and above all giving my study an aura of scholarly precision and detachment. However, my attraction to these themes is, as I mentioned earlier, clearly rooted in my own experience, in a perceived personal need; and my wish to take this study beyond the purely theoretical has caused me to become more aware of these needs in my children and students as well, and to recognize that a desire for change necessitates the willingness to take the risk of making a personal commitment.

As I began to consider the question of methodology and to make a few inquiries, one student (alluded to earlier) readily offered a rather large amount of very insightful journals, poetry, and drawings.[30] Similar information has become available from other students as well, though in some cases the most interesting, intriguing students appear to be the least loquacious; in these cases, an interpretation was required, as the available material consisted in large part of drawings and paintings, memories of brief conversations, etc. Since my teaching has continued as I pursue my research and coursework, this routine contact with students has made an important contribution to my understanding of temporality and the curriculum. I have, on occasion, solicited material in a systematic way (by means of selective drawing or writing assignments, for example) and have sometimes been able to follow the work of particularly interesting students in classes taught by other teachers as well. This material was interpreted in a variety of ways, with a consciousness of the need to let the students speak for themselves as much as possible. I have, for example, asked students to suggest a possible interpretation for a drawing or creative writing assignment. Occasionally the students themselves will initiate a search for the meaning of their work, and I will discuss with them a range of possible interpretations. The most insightful results, I have found, emerge from a lengthy acquaintance with the student: in such situations, an interpretation emerges from a relationship of give and take, a process of growing awareness on the part of both teacher and student. Finally, it seems appropriate that those students who, through their willing cooperation, have had a role in authorship be invited to review my work and to offer comments regarding further refinement.[31]

While a systematic quest for student material has its place, however, surprising insights often emerge from unexpected and unplanned situations. Just last week, for example, a close friend approached a small group of students who were disrupting her high school English class.[32] Caught in the act, these students surrendered the note they were passing. Unfolding the sheet of paper, she realized that these "subversives" had actually been exchanging poetry which they had written outside of class and for which the English 30 curriculum makes no provision. Such (generally unwelcome) intrusions into the smooth flow of school-time hold, I would suggest, the potential to bring both students and teachers face to face with an authentic "pedagogical moment." If, as Heidegger has suggested, the technician never really "sees" the hammer until it breaks or goes missing, it will be proposed as well that a break in the pattern of school-time, which will be paralleled in this study by a break with the more traditional methodologies, may well help us to see more clearly that which we have come to take for granted, and will perhaps also suggest a greater measure of respect for the knowledge of students whom we are at times tempted to label autistic or subversive.

How, then, would a more deeply personal encounter with the meaning of time impact on educational praxis? As a teacher of students ranging from the junior high school to the college level, I ask myself this question almost daily, recognizing that only a partial answer can be expected to emerge from this study. Summarizing my current thoughts briefly, however, I feel that the choice of a "text" is not in itself of the utmost importance. As a French teacher, I have found myself called on to spend several class periods teaching verb conjugations, while as an art teacher I often choose to allow students a great deal of liberty in determining how they will spend their class time. Both these situations, however, offer the potential for leading students beyond traditional ideology and towards a more deeply temporal self-understanding, one which is more fully rooted in their experience of the world around them.[33] Certain classes will lend themselves more naturally to such explorations, of course, and I would suggest that chief among these would be classes in curriculum, in the history and philosophy of education, and discussions with student teachers who are experiencing the rigors of practicum.

In all such situations, students would be tactfully challenged to reconsider their own understanding of existence, to recognize that the temporal structure of the class period in itself, our tidy substitute for the child's innate sense of time, is a mirror of the control which the curriculum exerts over our lives, and to contrast our habitual business, our urge to fill up each empty moment, with the implications of a personal encounter with the meaning of time. This vision of the curriculum calls both students and teachers to reflection on their own finitude, to a recognition of the limits of human control, and to acceptance of a measure of creative openness and uncertainty.

Chapter 2: The Line of Time

I. Introduction

In chapter one I explored briefly a few aspects of the diversity of temporal experience: time as raging torrent or placid pool, as black hole as well as all-encompassing, primordial whole. The "placid, silent pool" is drawn from Eastern mythology; in the West, images suggesting unidirectional, forward movement, such as the arrow and the river, seem to dominate. In this chapter I will be studying the origin of the linear sense of time which dominates the Western tradition, tracing its roots to our religious heritage and examining its implications for today's students and educators.

Popular iconography offers the most familiar examples of the prevalence of linear imagery: a birthday card which I received recently, for example, printed on coarse, blue paper, shows two sailboats cutting a foamy trough through choppy seas. As an image of time proposed to me on the occasion of my forty-first birthday, this card represents a wish for smooth, yet deliberate sailing through the coming year; the decisive forward motion of these boats suggests a measure of control over the forces of change embodied in wind and sea. Such iconography, as it appears in the public spaces of popular culture, offers a glimpse into the way we understand our own temporal existence, and a thoughtful consideration of any one of these metaphors will allow us to peel back a number of layers of meaning.

Like the traditional Western understanding of historical time, the sailboat follows a linear path towards a final goal which has been predetermined by a figure of authority (the ship's captain, for example, is often seen as an image of the god who has ultimate control over history). Misadventures which may occur along the way will not alter the original plan; should this boat be smashed on a reef, another will take its place and the goal will ultimately be reached. The sailboat suggests as well the importance in Western thought of preserving a sense of our cultural heritage. As a representative of an earlier age, it serves as an affirmation of the strength and endurance of our forefathers; the implied contrast with the supertankers and nuclear submarines of today reminds us as well of the material progress which we, following in their wake, have achieved.

Deeper yet, at the core of this iconographic fruit, lies a mythological kernel which it is the purpose of this chapter to explore, a set of basic assumptions regarding the nature of time which have grown out of our religious tradition. These temporal mythologies serve as the lens through which we glimpse the world, the "vital lie" (as Nietzsche has disparagingly called them) without which our everyday experience would dissolve into meaningless chaos. Each of these mythologies has its place in the pattern of fundamental assumptions regarding the nature of reality, expressed in the language (understood in a broadly inclusive sense) which is a part of our cultural tradition. Each contributes, as a result of the process of education, to our understanding of the world, and to the picture we form of ourselves as unique individuals living in this world.

Time and Culture

> Myths are made by poets. . . . The aim of philosophy is to substitute truth for myth (which by its very definition is falsehood, a fact too often forgotten in our post-Nietzschean fascination with myth). Since myths are there first and give men their first opinions, philosophy means a critical destruction of myth in favor of truth for the sake of freedom and living naturally. (Bloom 207)[1]

The foundational mythologies necessary for the birth and healthy development of a culture contribute to a shared interpretation of our experience of the world, to a consensus regarding our definition of knowledge. These myths shape our temporal self-understanding, as they serve as a guide to the selection and reading of the texts through which we derive an understanding of the past which is in turn projected into an image of the future. In the present of our classroom routines, these myths stand behind our pretenses to objectivity, as they determine the types of questions which students and teachers will accept as meaningful. Today's beginning students of science, for example, will agree that the ancient yet invisible "atom" is a meaningful concept in their vocabulary, while (because of the demise of its mythological foundations) the more recent, equally invisible "phlogiston" is not. More fundamentally, however, the structure of our curriculum--the way in which this structure orders our days and our lives, the rather narrow range of topics which it has come to define as meaningful knowledge--offers us a model of the cosmos which teachers and students rarely find the leisure to question.

Myths in the Western tradition have (as this study will show) claimed to be the unique representatives of Reality; our linear myths are Truth, while other forms of knowledge, in particular those in the animistic, "pagan" traditions, are dismissed as "fables, . . . legends, fit only for women and children" (Lyotard 80). It would seem that this unique claim is today accepted by much of the world. Though in North America and Europe, the religious tradition from which we derive our linear sense of time may seem to be in decline, our secular institutions (educational, economic, and political) which have been erected on the same mythological foundations have today permeated most of the world. Even the fundamentalist religious traditions (I will be emphasizing Christianity, but Judaism and Islam, too, have their roots in a Western sense of temporality) have recently experienced a degree of revival.

Today's educators can hardly fail to note, however, that our satisfaction with the apparent success of the progressive, linear view of the world--which is deeply rooted in our cultural heritage--is increasingly tempered by the failure of our official myths to penetrate the lives of individual students, perhaps even of many teachers. While linear institutions seem to have conquered the world, they no longer have the power to capture minds and souls. Education in the linear tradition--in its urgency to portray stories about our beginnings and endings as either myth (equated with falsehood) or Truth--compels the rational individual to reject categorically the shifting sands of the former in order to ground his life on the bedrock of Truth. Yet this chapter will consider the possibility that this dichotomizing has finally turned on itself, that what was once believed to be solid rock has become a miry ooze which is threatening to swallow up the institutions it has traditionally upheld.

Writers such as Bloom and Nisbet have taken note of this threat, and insist that the continued well-being of Western culture is at risk. Today's educators, they say, must respond with a renewed emphasis on our foundational texts. Students must begin once again to read the Bible, the "Classics," and the foundational documents of Western democracy (such as the U.S. Declaration of Independence). Yet these writers have too often failed to see that reading itself is an ideological activity, one which presupposes a common mythological language and an agreement regarding the choice of texts. While a return to traditional passive modes of reading may result in a generation of students which once again displays an outward familiarity with these texts, such superficial remedies can never fill the void left by the demise of the mythological bedrock which once lay beneath.

Thus it becomes clear that the apparent indifference of students toward our cultural traditions is not due alone to a neglect of our foundational texts, but rather to the eclipse of the linear myths on which our traditional reading of these texts was based. It is equally clear that any attempts to revive these texts which fails to address the troubled state of the myths on which they are based will quickly degenerate into superficial indoctrination. This chapter will point the way toward a more _active_ reading of our foundational texts. Such a reading is, as chapter five will suggest, a necessary first step in a process which will lead toward a reconsideration of other modes of temporal understanding (which our tradition has led us to neglect); at the the same time, such a reading will initiate important process of clearing a space for the creation of a personal understanding of the meaning of time.

Toward a Polytheistic Curriculum?

Beneath the everyday language of temporal metaphor, beneath the foundational mythologies which establish the meaning of living-in-time, Western thought has traditionally pointed to the ultimate source of meaning, the transcendental signified. This transcendental signified is the Captain of the ship, the great Mind which determines the ultimate pattern of history and which gives meaning to human enterprises.

Thus I might say to a conservative friend that the stories found in the first chapters of Genesis are myths, yet I would hasten to add that my usage of this term (myth) steps outside all claims regarding their historical veracity; they are myths in the sense that they have become stories which offer insights into the meaning of our origins, and by means of which we make sense of our lives.

This definition of myth seems to offer a counter to the traditional dichotomizing of such stories into Truth and Falsehood. Yet my friend, while she may concede the validity of such a definition, will understand tacitly that behind these "myths" there lies a transcendental signified to which they owe their ultimate meaning, just as there is a transcendental signified behind the language of everyday discourse.

> In the long run it is not very satisfactory to say that the meaning of a sign system is fixed by a process whereby every word is related to a definition that in turn becomes a word (or words) that is (are) related to other definitions and so on without end. Where do we stop? Or, where do we begin? Meaning, in most sign systems, is fixed by an appeal to an idea or concept that transcends the sign system thereby providing stability for its meanings. . . . [C]andidates for the origin of truth, another name for a transcendental signified, are, 'the spoken word, . . . the voice of reason, or . . . the Word of God'. (Cherryholmes 288-9)

Yet writers such as Jacques Derrida have pointed out that

> Sometimes such meanings [transcendental signifieds] are seen as the origin of all the others, the source from which they flow; but this is a curious way of thinking,

> because for this meaning ever to have been possible other signs must already have existed. (Eagleton 133)

How would my friend respond to the suggestion that "the idea of a transcendental signified, simply put, is a fiction" (Cherryholmes 302)? What such a statement implies is that rather than a linear chain of meaning anchored to a bedrock of Truth, we would have a serpentine model, a continuous play of myths giving meaning to other myths, with no possibility of ultimate closure. Our "monotheistic" view of meaning would thus be exchanged for a linguistic polytheism, a recognition that meaning occurs in a play of shifting costumes, none of which is likely to correspond to ultimate reality, and all of which may at one time or another play the role of transcendental signified. Though she might object to my terminology, my friend would probably concede that even in the Christian tradition God is ultimately unknowable. Despite our stereotyped imagery, God is greater than any concrete physical form, and it is probably not too great a leap for my friend to admit that the Majestic-Old-Man-On-The-Throne is a convenient anthropomorphism.

Yet in spite of such appeals to the mysterious in our own tradition, it is to be expected that students offered such an approach to knowledge in the classroom will find themselves cast adrift, erring on the seas of time with no sense of direction. Does a critique of linear myths necessarily imply as well the demise of culture as we know it? Is it possible to reaffirm the value of the past as a guide to living, both in the present and toward the future, while questioning the assumptions which have guided our traditional reading of the past? Perhaps the alinear "erring" which will result from a deconstruction of the rudder which has guided our institutional juggernaut across the stormy seas of chaos offers a key to the rediscovery of the meaning of the past, one which will lead as well toward a renewed sense of the labyrinthine potential of the future.

Yet change will not come easily, and the path of change, too, is fraught with danger. My conversations with friends and associates have shown that while linear time may indeed be lived as simply one mythology among others by a few individuals (in particular, those who have grown up in a non-Western mythological climate), the mind steeped in the traditional Western understanding of knowledge upholds linear mythologies as the only "reasonable" way of seeing the world. As Berger notes:

> To be in a "right" relationship with the sacred cosmos is to be protected against the nightmare threats of chaos. To fall out of such a "right" relationship is to be abandoned on the edge of the abyss of meaninglessness. (Berger 27)

Thus, in addition to the threat to the institutions which constitute the world as we know it, an impeachment of our mythological tradition holds a measure of personal risk for the questioner; as she is perceived to be casting into doubt the nature of Reality itself, she places herself in an aberrant relationship with this Reality.

Yet a simple denial of that which has become obvious to many educators and which is sensed in varying degrees even by students is no longer tolerable. Just as myths have a temporal origin, so too they have an end, a limit to their powers of control. Thus the apparent weakening of the "hold of the past" which numerous authors have begun to note with dismay, the "sullenness and withdrawal" of our students when confronted daily with the moribund myths of official linear culture may well be due, not to a lack of interest in the meaning of our origins and destiny, but rather to a more fundamental malaise which lies at the heart of the linear model itself (Williams 303, see also Bloom 51f, Nisbet).

A revaluation of the "polytheistic" world view will result in the dissolution of the sharp distinction which has been drawn between linear and alinear myths. Our study, in drawing attention to the mythological impact of the linear account, will allow us to assess the implications, both positive and negative, of this story on our understanding of existence. Yet to agree that the transcendental signified is a fiction is not to suggest that it must be discarded. This fiction will, rather, be read with the utmost attention, as it will be seen that it is indeed a story about us. A recognition of the mortality of the linear model (as manifested, for example, in student apathy toward the imposition of linear culture) offers a potential opening toward temporal renewal grounded on a reappraisal of other, neglected models, as well as on a critical revaluation of the foundational myths in our linear tradition.

II. The Meaning of Linear Time: A Definition

The linearity of time may be understood in two rather distinct (but complementary) senses. Firstly, time presents itself to me as a *now*; as I write, this "now" is experienced as a constantly present, yet constantly forward-moving, moment. The "now" of the early morning has receded into the past; as I re-read this paragraph, in the "now" of a midmorning several days later, I anticipate the successive present moments of the remainder of the day, and experience in memory the "now" of the past.

> It is often said that the 'now' or present moment of our consciousness is steadily moving forward through time from past to future, so that, eventually, the year 2000 will become 'now' and by the same token the instant in which you read this will by now have been passed over and consigned to history. Sometimes the now is considered anchored, and time itself is thought to flow, as a river flows past a bankside observer. (Davies 127)

While Davies presents this view of time from the standpoint of a physicist, for whom the "commonsense" understanding conceals a number of fundamental paradoxes, it nonetheless seems to correspond to everyday experience, in particular as expressed in the language of our traditional Western interpretation. In this interpretation, with its emphasis on the immanent presence of time, past and future are understood as derivative of this presence.

> Thus it is not properly said that there are three times, past, present, and future. Perhaps it might be said rightly that there are three times: a time present of things past; a time present of things present; and a time present of things future. (Augustine *Confessions*; Book XI, sec. 20)

It makes no sense, Augustine says, to speak of time past and time future, since both exist only as they are available to my consciousness, in memory or imagination, in the *present*. Yet this is not the constant presence of the tranquil pool; almost a thousand years before the time of Augustine, Heraclitus (around 500 B.C.) writes of his experience of time as constant flux:

> We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not. . .
>
> You cannot step twice into the same rivers; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you. (in Warner 26)

This description of time is similar to that of the raging torrent, washing away everything familiar, which I describe in chapter one. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, echoes this thought:

> If any fraction of time be conceived that cannot now be divided even into the most minute momentary point, this alone is what we may call time present. But this flies so rapidly from future to past that it cannot be extended by any delay. (Book XI, sec.15)

Similarly, Newton writes that

> Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself and by its own nature, flows uniformly, without regard to anything external. (in Capra 65)

The flow of time does not in itself establish its linearity, of course; what is required is a purposive, forward-moving flow. In this sense, the Western understanding of linear time is inseparable from the idea of progress.

> Simply stated, the idea of progress holds that mankind has advanced in the past--from some aboriginal condition of primitiveness, barbarism, or even nullity--is now advancing, and will continue to advance through the foreseeable future. . . . It [the idea of progress] is inseparable from a sense of time flowing in unilinear fashion. (Nisbet 3-4)

Time and Text: the Cosmic Theatre

The idea of progress, then, suggests that the flow of time has a preferred direction, a sense of purpose which, this study will show, favors the enterprises of Man, placing him at the temporal centre of the universe. This sense of purpose, which emerges ever more clearly in the course of the progressive unfolding of the pattern of history, points in turn to an Author, an ultimate Word, which stands behind this temporal pattern, and who has revealed the role which Man is to play in an immutable and inerrant Text. Thus any study of linear time must be informed by a reexamination of the traditional texts which have so thoroughly shaped the understanding of time on which our institutions are grounded.

The mythological roots of linear time may be traced to early Christianity, and in turn to the confluence of Hebrew thought with a variety of other philosophies, Greek rationalism in particular. The Old Testament of the Christian Bible (itself a blend of various Middle Eastern traditions) is no doubt the most clearly identifiable source of Hebrew influence, and the traditional Christian reading of this text (particularly as it stands in the writings of Paul and and in the works of later builders of the tradition such as Augustine) reveals most of the key concepts which underlie linear temporality. Though the temporal metaphors which ground the Western understanding of the world have today been stripped of overtly religious terminology, though the old myths have indeed lost much of their former acceptance as literal truth, this study will show that their basic tenets continue to undergird the "modern" view of the world, in the guise of more "scientific" but equally unyielding myths which constitute the essence of the official curriculum as most of us experience it. These myths are no doubt more palatable to the "enlightened" mind, but rest on an equally irrational foundation.

Christianity is distinct from the "pagan" religions which preceded it in that it is a historical religion, one which is grounded on actual events which took place in real time (Russell 60). While Christianity is not the only religion to celebrate concepts such as the dying and risen god, for example, it is unique in its emphasis on the centrality of the Resurrection as an observable physical event which occurred in the (then) recent past: "If Christ be not risen your faith is vain" (I Cor. 15:17). This Christian preoccupation with history is also a characteristic of Hebrew thought which preceded it; both these traditions anchor the meaning of time to a Text which becomes an original source of truth, a bedrock to which the chain of linear history is firmly attached.

In the opening verse of the first book of the Judaeo-Christian Text we are offered a clear statement of the origins of time as we know it: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Or, as Augustine would read this passage:

> He caused time to have a beginning; and man whom He had previously made, He made in time, not from a new and sudden resolution, but by his unchangeable and eternal design. (City of God, book XI; in Nisbet 62)

Thus linear time, in the Western tradition, is historical time, beginning at a fixed moment in the past as a result of the designs of Yahweh, a god who takes an intense interest in human history, at least insofar as it relates to his chosen people.

The Western understanding of time suggests, as our mythological roots show, that from its beginnings time and conflict have been inseparable. Traces of early narratives are found throughout the Old Testament where Yahweh, the God of Light, is seen doing battle with the sea monster which inhabits the "deep" of Genesis 1:2. This "deep" is in fact the word tehom, related etymologically to Tiamat of the Enuma elish. While Genesis 1 is a part of the relatively late "priestly" text, recorded in the fourth century B.C., the Enuma elish is a Mesopotamian creation saga, one of the earliest known cosmogonies, dating from the time of Hammurabi, c. 1700 B.C. (Campbell Occidental 75,102,111). This earlier account shows clearly that the coming of Order requires the sword of conflict, wielded by the hero of light, the sun god Marduk, as he does battle with the "dragon-mother of all creation" (Phillips 5), seen here as the embodiment of primordial Chaos.

> Then Tiamat advanced; Marduk, as well: they approached each other for the battle. . . . He [Marduk] shot an arrow that tore into her, cut through her inward parts, and pierced her heart. She was undone. He stood upon her carcass and those gods who had marched by her side turned for their lives.
>
> . . . .
>
> Whereafter, he split her, like a shellfish, in two halves; set one above, as a heavenly roof, fixed with a crossbar; . . . He then established upon this a great abode, the Earth [with the other half]. (Campbell Occidental 82-3)

The parallelism between this saga and Old Testament traditions is evident in the following selection from the Psalms:

> Thou rulest the surging sea, calming the turmoil of its

> waves. Thou didst crush the monster Rahab with a mortal blow and scatter thy enemies with thy strong arm. Thine are the heavens, the earth is thine also; the world with all that is in it is of thy foundation. (Psalms 89:9-12, see also Job 26:12-13)

Yahweh is, of course, one god, a male god, who creates in his image a man who is to bring to completion the task which Yahweh has begun; this first man sets the stage for the cosmic drama as he undertakes the ordering and subduing of the undisciplined chaos of the newly created world. Though this original world is indeed good and perfect, it has not yet entered meaningful existence in historical time. This temporal ordering is, then, the work assigned to the first man. As he is made in Yahweh's image, so he must make over the world in his own image. As his first task, the man is to name each of the living creatures, to assign them a role in the historical drama, an act which parallels the original creation, when Yahweh "spoke, and it was; . . . commanded, and it stood firm" (Gen. 2:19, Ps. 33:9). By the power of the Word Yahweh brought the world into existence, and by the power of the Word Man completes the temporal ordering of the newly created world. Thus the exploits of the first man reach back to the Origin, in that they constitute a re-enactment of the Creation. Yet the record of these events, the primordial Word, reveals as well that these exploits constitute an adumbration of the final scenes in the cosmic theatre, thus completing the linear chain.

> All these things that happened to them [Adam and his descendants] were symbolic, and were recorded for our benefit as a warning. For upon us the fulfillment of the ages has come. (I Cor. 10:11)

Drawing on Paul's exegesis of the Old Testament, early Christian philosophers saw that the Word serves as an infallible guide to those who would discern the deeper, unifying pattern which underlies the apparent chaos of human existence. In the light of the Word, the purposelessness of day-to-day existence is transformed; each of us, guided by the temporal knowledge which the Word imparts, can participate in the Order of history. "All things work together for good," (Rom. 8:28) even the most troublesome and obscure:

> What we call the fortuitous is nothing but that, the reason and the cause of which is concealed from our view. (Augustine, in Nisbet 71)

"The purpose of my existence is to make history," a fellow graduate student recently told me. This student sees that even the seemingly insignificant choices and decisions which he must make from day to day can take on eternal significance if made in conformity with the cosmic pattern. Man, this student might argue, is able to contribute meaningfully to the development of history as he collaborates with the task of the first man, working to expel the remaining vestiges of primordial darkness and chaos. Just as Adam was to "till and to keep" the garden, making of it a perfect home for himself and his children (Gen. 2:15), so subsequent generations are to extend this order until the entire world has been shaped into the perfection of the original Eden.

> What reforms has this age not witnessed! Think of the cities which the threefold virtue of our present sovereignty has built, augmented, or restored, God bestowing his blessing on so many [kings] as on one! The censuses they have taken! The peoples they have driven back! . . . The barbarians they have kept in check! In very truth, this empire has become the garden of the world. (Tertullian, in Nisbet 52)

Similarly, today's Man might explain his historical destiny to those who still inhabit the darkness of prehistory in these terms:

> I bear on my shoulders the destiny of the human race. Your tribal life with its stone-age weapons and bee-hive huts, its primitive coracles and elementary social structure, has nothing to compare with our civilization--with our science, medicine, and law, our armies, our architecture, our commerce, and our transport system which is rapidly annihilating space and time. Our right to supersede you is the right of the higher over the lower. (Lewis _Silent Planet_ 135)

The World Divided

Yet, as these passages suggest, the victory is never complete. Because of the Fall, through which chaos once again cast its shadow over the perfection of the Original creation, Man's role in the drama of history demands constant vigilance. Thus, if he is to assure the establishment of his kingdom of peace and order, Man must, like Yahweh before him, take up the sword of conflict. It is indeed difficult to imagine the meaning of historical time in a perfect world: history and progress, because they are based on a model which sees time as an unfolding drama, cannot truly begin until an element of suspense is introduced.

> The serpent was more crafty than any wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat from any tree in the garden?'
>
> . . . . .
>
> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and that it was pleasing to the eye and tempting to contemplate, she took some and ate it. (Gen. 3:1,6)

This story has had an enormous impact on the Western understanding of historical time (as well as on relations between the female and male of our species). Because time originates in a sense of loss, Man--ostensibly as a result of a woman's faithlessness--finds himself cut off from his original experience of wholeness, and only through heroic struggle can it be restored. Thus, to the linear mind, all the world is a cosmic theatre, all human beings are called to join the conflict on the stage of history, to play the role assigned them by the primordial Text.

> For our fight is not against human foes, but against

> cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens. (Eph. 6:12, see also Heb. 12:1)

As chapter three will suggest, however, historical conflict is by no means the only conceivable temporal paradigm. These tales of primordial mayhem, particularly the early creation stories where the heroic male deity defeats the monstrous specter of chaos, point clearly to a clash between opposing mythologies which occurred around 3000 B.C., as patriarchal culture began to establish its dominance, often by force, over archaic goddess societies.[2] These archaic traditions, because of their close connection to the earth, generally tended ~~to~~ recognize the geographical limitations of their local manifestation of the deity. Yet this connection has also led them to an image of time which lacks the fallenness which characterizes our tradition: life is generally understood, not as a linear drama, but as "lunar" cycles of light and dark. Because she thus embraces all aspects of being, the archaic Goddess is acknowledged as

> mistress of stars and heavens, the beauty of nature, generating womb, nurturing power of earth and fertility, fulfiller of all needs, but also the power of death and the horror of decay and annihilation. From her all proceeds, and to her all returns. (Whitmont 42)

It might, of course, be objected that the anthropocentrism of linear time offers an equally harmonious sense of unity. The traditional Christian creation myth teaches, as Augustine and other writers have noted, that all

Men are one. The birth of Eve from the body of Adam, it is suggested, offers clear evidence of this unity.

> God had two purposes in deriving all men from one man. His first purpose was to give unity to the human race by the likeness of nature. His second purpose was to bind mankind by the bond of peace, through blood relationship, into one harmonious whole. (City of God 295)

In line with this tradition, Paul affirms that there is "no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person . . ." (Gal. 3:28). Unity, of course, does not abolish hierarchy, and who is better able to carry out the tasks assigned to the first man than the Men to whom the sword of the Word has been bequeathed? Ultimately, unity is contingent on a standard set by the official interpretation of this Word, a measure which excludes the majority of the human race. Not, of course, arbitrarily; in the Christian tradition, the Word divides all humanity into two camps as a result of a free individual choice for or against its imperatives.

> . . . for all the difference of the many and very great nations throughout the world in religion and morals, language, weapons, and dress, there exist no more than the two kinds of society, which, according to our Scriptures, we have rightly called the two cities. One city is that of men who live according to the flesh. The other is of men who live according to the spirit. (Augustine City of God 295)

Thus, while in the archaic world "there is room enough for many Gods and many Goddesses,"

> in the universe of the Christians . . . there is one God alone; not only must he conquer over all Gods, he must make it as if there were no other Gods, had never been any Gods but only false idols, the work of their Devil. (Bradley 13)

The more recent, linear interpretation of secular history shares the exclusivism of the religious tradition: only the city of the elect, those who "live according to the spirit," can be rightly said to participate in the meaningful order of historical time. J.S. Mill outlines this argument in his essay On Liberty:

> The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in unceasing antagonism to that disposition to aim at something better . . . [T]he contest between the two [progress and custom] constitutes the chief interest of the history of mankind. The greater part of the world has, properly speaking, no history, because the despotism of Custom is complete. This is the case over the whole East. (66)

This "Custom," which the progressive historian disdains, represents the ancient knowledge of earth and body, the primordial Mother in which our tradition was once rooted. As the ancient mythological texts show, early patriarchal thought, like a restless adolescent son, was compelled to break decisively with the Mother; out of this conflict, represented as a clash between Light and Darkness, Good and

Evil, arose the dichotomies which characterize the linear world today. The distinction between Good and Evil is perhaps the most fundamental of metaphors: life is good, death is evil; growth is good, decay is evil; such dichotomies continue to underlie even our secular institutions. Any mythology which tends to dilute these fundamental dualities is anathema to the Western mind (which perhaps senses in a return to such earlier traditions the menacing visage of Tiamat). This separation is further emphasized in the account of the two trees in the garden.

> The Lord God made trees spring from the ground, all trees pleasant to look at and good for food; and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:9)

Numerous archaic traditions speak of but one tree, offering both life and knowledge. In the patriarchal garden, however, life and knowledge have been split, a split which parallels the division between body and soul, mind and matter, man and woman. Knowledge of the body, represented by the temptation to eat of the fruit, becomes dangerous, evil, and is associated with the woman and the serpent of archaic goddess traditions (Gen. 3:2,3,22; Campbell Ocidental 14,16). This dawning of a separation between the forces of Good and those of Evil represents an important rung on the ladder of linear progress; no longer chained by magic and superstition, Man is on the path toward the freedom of rational individuality, the ability to choose to participate in the establishment of cosmic Order.

Yet the pride which Man takes in the knowledge that he plays a central role in the cosmic conflict is purchased at a price; the Word upon which he bases the understanding of his place in the pattern of history becomes as well a weapon which "cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the place where life and spirit, joints and marrow divide." (Heb. 4:12). This sword penetrates the deepest layers of human experience, cutting apart that which was united in earlier traditions. Whereas in the archaic world the natural cycles are a part of a greater unity, the military metaphors of the linear tradition rest on a fundamental split in the cosmos:

> Where formerly there had been the planetary cycles, marking days and nights, the months, years, and eons of unending time, there was now to be a straight line of progressive world history with a beginning, a middle, and a prophesied end . . . . Where formerly there had been, as the ideal, harmony with the whole, there was now discrimination, a decision to be made, "not peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34) . . . (Campbell Inner Reaches 42)

Thus the sword with which he routs the forces of chaos is indeed two-edged, and is easily turned back on Man himself, setting him in opposition with the Other: with woman, with the environment, and ultimately with the deeper layers of his own psyche.

"I am Odysseus"

Linear time offers a picture of a world which is in a constant state of crisis and disequilibrium, in which human beings are set in unrelenting opposition to the primordial Mother in which they once found their ultimate sense of meaning. Yet ultimately this loss of meaning, this identity crisis which is a product of a divided world, leads to the emergence of a new sense of the self, a sovereign Ego which is able to stand apart from and contemplate the world.

In the Hebrew tradition, success in the struggle with chaos depended on the continued assistance of Yahweh; hence the need for continuous sacrifice and other ritual acts around which community time revolved. With increasing maturity, however, and as a result of influences such as the Greek tradition, Man acquires other powerful tools, in particular that of reason. Whereas archaic ritual preserves an element of the endless repetition which was essential to "primitive" temporality, reason permits a further break with the intellectual childhood with which these cycles are associated. Man is now increasingly able to stand outside the objects of the natural world, to observe the forces of change as they act on these objects, and, through the use of inductive reason, to discover the natural laws which govern these forces. The distancing from nature which was demanded in Hebrew monotheism is given a firmer, more rational footing with the emergence of the Individual, who not only sees a meaningful pattern in human history, but also, reasoning from cause to effect, understands the natural laws which govern that pattern, and grasps ever more firmly the role which Man can play in ensuring that the history bears the stamp of his image.

This process of intellectual development may be compared to the psychological maturation of a child; the earliest portions of the Old Testament were composed during the transition from the late Bronze Age to the early Iron Age (around 1000 B.C.), which (as Whitmont suggests) corresponds roughly to the adolescence of a child of today. Even by this time the development of the ego is well under way, as passages referring to the moral responsibility of the individual suggest:

> It is the soul that sins, and no other, that shall die; a son shall not share a father's guilt, nor a father his son's. The righteous man shall reap the fruit of his own righteousness, and the wicked man the fruit of his own wickedness. (Eze. 18:20)

Similarly, Yahweh says of Himself: "I AM; that is who I am. Tell them that I AM has sent you to them" (Ex. 3:14), a passage which might be seen as a parallel to the statement of Homer's Odysseus:

> in the words "I am Odysseus," I am occurs for the first time of which we have record. (Whitmont 50)

This emergent Individual is the long-awaited Hero who, wielding the sword of the Word, will bring to fulfillment the patterns of history, dispelling at last the remaining vestiges of chaos; yet he is also the troubled, ambivalent human being who, in "set[ting] up his personal name against the stars,"

> ensures that the now-isolated ego will cry out in painful recognition of its complete alienation in the fear of death. (Thompson, in Sjoo 283)

III. Linear Time and the Curriculum: An Autobiographical Critique

The linear tradition is clearly an optimistic, heroic tradition. Though its roots lie in a recognition of the inevitability of death, linear Man can overcome time as he builds institutions in harmony with a timeless pattern. Education is the cornerstone of the linear edifice, as it offers the only assurance that subsequent generations will understand the pattern of history and continue the struggle with time which this understanding demands. The curriculum will necessarily, because of the importance of its role as a provider of temporal continuity, be slow to change, and will reflect the more conservative of the community's values. This conservatism will be apparent in the ideological stance of the curriculum, both epistemologically and ontologically. Epistemologically, the curriculum serves as a guide in our search for truth, as it defines the limits of meaning. Students may well, on occasion, ask questions which fall outside this boundary, but they will be rewarded, at best, with blank stares and a change of subject on the part of the teacher. Ontologically, the curriculum serves (as the embodiment of the fundamental myths of our society) to define who we are and the purpose of our existence, to give meaning to our lives, as noted repeatedly throughout this chapter.

The positive value of our Western tradition, and of the linear curriculum founded on this tradition, must not be underestimated. Although, as a product of this curriculum, it is indeed difficult for me to assess its value objectively, it seems fair to say that Christian thought on which this tradition is founded has the potential--if it is allowed to grow and change as a living mythos--to contribute to our spiritual prosperity. Perhaps most obviously, this tradition has given us the modern sciences which, in addition to providing for our material well-being, have also given us an awe-inspiring and revolutionary view of our place in the universe, the raw material for generations of mythmakers.

Yet in spite of the obvious value of the linear curriculum, the ironic tone of my analysis has, in conjunction with my introductory comments, made it clear to the reader that this is a critique of the dominant linear myths. In what sense has this tradition failed us? A brief consideration of my own experience will bring this question into clearer focus.

In the second year of my schooling I began to attend a small Christian school in Southern California: Puente Junior Academy (PJA). Many of the teachers were intelligent and well educated, and instruction proceeded in many ways as in public schools (though the small size of the school required the integration of grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, etc., with each teacher responsible for two grades.) There were, of course, a few striking differences as well: in Bible class and morning worships we were offered a traditional Christian reading of the origin and destiny of the universe and of our place in the cosmic drama, with a few anomalies peculiar to the Last-days Remnant (LDR) church, which sponsored this and many other similar schools throughout North America.[3] The following brief summary of the religious emphasis of the curriculum at PJA will serve to provide an experiential base for my critique of the traditional linear myths which were outlined earlier in this chapter, as well as to establish more clearly the link between the Christian narrative tradition and the official myths which continue to underlie the secular curriculum.

In theory, the Bible was the centre of religious instruction at PJA; the principle which guided our reading of this text was that it was to be read literally unless there was a clear symbolic intent. Thus the Genesis story was accepted as a historical account of our origins, an ex nihilo creation which occurred around 4000 B.C. This understanding of the shortness of historical time was reflected as well in our reading of the apocalypses of Daniel and the Revelation. The time remaining was short in the extreme, Christ would soon return to fulfill and thus put an end to history; LDR doctrine emphasized the importance of our church, as the "remnant" alluded to in apocalyptic literature, in hastening the eschaton (the "end of the world").

The ability to see ourselves as the focus of Christian eschatology suggests clearly enough that much of our "literal" study of the Bible was in fact "interpretation not text" (Nietzsche Beyond 30). Passages from the Bible were carefully selected, juxtaposed, and interpreted in conformity with traditional belief, and much of our study was devoted to the reading of commentaries on the biblical selections. Throughout our study, the question of the historical origin and authorship of the text was almost completely overlooked. If alluded to at all, it was assumed that the traditional ascription (of the first five books to Moses, for example) was unquestionable, and that in any event the human writers were simply the mouthpiece for the one true Author who stands beyond history and time. Even our textbook commentaries and interpretations seemed to take on a similarly "authorless" status.

One of my most vivid memories of these years is of morning worship in fourth grade (1956-57 school year), where our teacher often emphasized the nearness of the "time of trouble" (Dan. 12:1), with graphic details of the torture chambers which were being prepared (perhaps in the basements of Catholic churches!)--a replay of the inquisitions of the Middle Ages--in order to force the "remnant" to renounce their beliefs. Even in schools like PJA the tone and emphasis of such religious instruction would today be seen as somewhat aberrant, and it is quite possible that my memories of this year have been exaggerated somewhat by the intensity of my response to them (which included overwhelming feelings of guilt and psychosomatic symptoms--in particular, intense nausea--which extended over much of the school year).

Yet frightening though this view of history may be, it seems to have a continuing appeal. Even today many church members orient their lives around the ultimate meaning which this view of time assigns to the individual believer. This "remnant" (as they tend to see themselves) lives in a secular society to which they seem firmly attached, while speaking with solemn relish of the eventual need to flee to the safety of deserts and mountains. The persistent teaching of such a view of the world to young children might well be expected to produce unbalanced adults. Yet, while the cold war atmosphere of the late fifties may have lent itself to this type of apocalyptic fervor and to the dichotomizing of the universe into opposing forces of good and evil by which it was nourished, even at that time my classmates seemed to accept such stories with equanimity. Preoccupied with baseball, model cars, and new bicycles, the official myths were perhaps dismissed by a few students with indifference, while the majority managed to relegate them to a temporally segregated corner of their psyche.

The Death of God

Today, the atmosphere of post-war crisis has faded, and though the more distinctive features of the LDR view of history seem to have lost their impact, these traditions continue to form a part of the official curriculum for thousands of young people in the U.S. and Canada. As schools like PJA continue to emphasize aspects of the official culture which students find unrealistic and restrictive (standards on dress and entertainment in particular), student reaction ranges from docile acceptance to stubborn resistance, with the majority of students falling somewhere in between. The response of this majority to the imposition of (what must often seem to them to be) an irrelevant --perhaps even an alien--culture has been well described by R. Williams as "a general sullenness and withdrawal of interest", a quiet apathy which results from a "general mood of disbelief" (303-4). Yet the fact that Williams is speaking, not of a small network of religious schools, but rather of a crisis which he feels is facing the whole of Western society, points to a clear parallel between these two experiences, one which may well lie in their common mythological roots. It has been suggested, perhaps most vividly by Nietzsche, that these traditional roots are either dead or dying:

> The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him--you and I. . . . Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him." (Gay Science 125)

More recently, writers such as Nisbet and Bloom have noted the practical effects of the demise of our foundational mythologies, pointing out that the "grand narratives" (Lyotard's terminology) of Western society are increasingly meaningless to today's students. Yet Nietzsche was speaking of the death of the *soul* of these myths, and while the soul may well be dead, the *body* seems to live on. In this respect, the requiem for our mythological heritage is certainly premature.

A glance at current science fiction will show that traditional myths such as that of the hero of light locked in a cosmic struggle with the forces of darkness are prevalent in today's popular culture. The positive value of the imaginative and romantic appeal of such myths must be tempered by an awareness of the stereotypes which they generally promote: a heroic male winning the affections of a dependent female through his strength and cunning in a battle with an evil power which embodies all our archetypal fears of the Other, including once again the feminine (as our earlier encounter with Tiamat has shown). Similarly, myths which emphasize Man's duty to subjugate nature, to complete the primordial task of remaking her chaos into the divine image of Order, continue to inspire many students as they plan for lives of personal gain based on the ruthless exploitation of her resources. In this case, the myth is more clearly bereft of redeeming spiritual value, and serves essentially to promote and to legitimate our material acquisitiveness (while perhaps at the same time laying the foundation for our endemic exploitation of and violence against women).

Once again, a study of schools like PJA, with their overtly traditionalist reading of these myths, will serve to bring into clearer focus the nature of their influence on students. A group of teen-aged peace activists from Montreal recently visited Wild Rose Academy (hereafter refered to as "WRA") an LDR high school in Alberta not unlike PJA.[4] In the course of their presentation, a student seated next to me remarked "Why worry about the Bomb? There won't be a nuclear war--Jesus will come before that can happen." Clearly, students who have been taught that the world was created _ex nihilo_ a few thousand years ago and that according to the divine plan it will be discarded within the next few decades can hardly be expected to take an interest in such "superficial" matters as nuclear proliferation or the deterioration of the environment.

The secular curriculum, too, is a product of a common Western culture which has its roots in the Bible. Behind this curriculum stand the fundamental mythologies which have been derived from our religious traditions. Just as students at PJA read the Bible as an "authorless" yet authoritative text, so the modern curriculum speaks from an anonymous power-base, and is read as the disembodied Word of an anonymous Father whose authority seems a part of the natural order. Just as students in schools like PJA would, if pressed by an adult questioner, acknowledge the fundamentality of concepts such as Redemption and Atonement, so children who have been educated in the modern Western tradition would affirm the centrality of modern "myths" such as Human Rights and the Freedom of Choice. Yet beyond the temporal boundaries of religious exercises, Redemption and [illegible] living culture, and even their fundamental Rights and Choices become the right to wear, to watch, to buy, the freedom to choose (as a philosophy professor put it recently) between Coke and Pepsi.

Thus our foundational myths, whether religious or secular, have become hollow rhetoric, little more than an empty shell; their demise corresponds to Nietzsche's "death of God," the waning of the transcendental signified from which they draw their ultimate meaning. Like the "zombies" of Haitian folklore, these myths can still do useful labor, hewing wood and drawing water, but they have no soul, and thus lack the power to inspire students to anything beyond material self-interest. Not surprisingly, then, our students are transformed into the image of their gods. Just as the transcendental signified has become a fiction, so too the heroic rational individual is seen to be the fictional product of our personal mythologies, the sum of the stories which contribute to the language through which the "I" makes itself heard.

> [I]n the Nietzschean sense the self is fictive; it is an aesthetic creation, and the means by which the self is planned and "built" are story-telling and myth-making. (Pinar Autobiography 18)

Students who have been brought up in a tradition which equates fiction with falsehood thus become zombies for whom the shell, the empty body which has survived the death of our mythological tradition, is the only reality. The death of this fictional hero is potentially a positive step if it opens the way for the creation of new, more dynamically personal myths. Yet more often this void will be filled by other readymade constructs, as students are taught (by schools and by the media) to distrust their own taste, to see themselves through the eye of an ideal spectator to whose judgement they must submit (Lasch 29).

Losing the Battle with Death

The malaise which threatens our traditional myths, and which is shaking the foundations of Western institutions, may be understood as a conflict between the traditional picture of the physical universe and the more robust image offered by modern science. This conflict has been provoked by the definition of knowledge which is inherent in the linear view of time. In our urgency to place human interests at the centre of history, our tradition has, since its origins, created a split between Fact and fiction, Truth and legend, and affirmed the role of our own heritage as the unique representative of Fact and Truth. Because of our failure to understand the origin and meaning of our foundational myths, the clash between science and religion which has resulted must be seen as a struggle between two sciences, an unequal combat which, because of the rules of the linear game, the outdated "science" of our religious tradition was destined to lose.

What about the symbolism of the Bible? Based on the Old [illegible] observations of five to six

> thousand years ago and an anthropology no longer credible, it is hardly fit today to turn anybody on. In fact, the famous conflict of science and religion has actually nothing to do with religion, but is simply of two sciences: that of 4000 B.C. and that of A.D. 2000. And is it not ironic that our great Western civilization, which has opened to the minds of all mankind the infinite wonders of a universe of untold billions of galaxies and untold billions of years, should have been saddled in its infancy with a religion squeezed into the tightest little cosmological image [the traditional 6000-year framework] known to any people on earth? (Campbell _Myths_ 90)

Yet, while this framework has been supplanted by the vast temporal panoramas of modern science, while the tidiness of our cosmic clockwork has given way to an unpredictable--perhaps ultimately unknowable--labyrinth, these narrow myths continue to limit our understanding of education. Mimicking the predictability of the Newtonian universe, school-time offers a reassuring sense of stability in a frighteningly chaotic world. _Real_ knowledge, in this anthropocentric cosmos, is seen as that which offers power and control over the material world, concrete weapons to be used in the here and now in the struggle against disorder and death. Such a definition of knowledge does not, however, offer a foundation on which to build a meaningful culture.

> Without myth every culture loses the healthy power of its creativity: only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement. . . . Even the stat

> knows no more powerful unwritten laws than the mythological foundation that guarantees its connection with religion and its growth from mythical notions. The problem, then, is to recover myth, and thus to restore the lost vitality of culture. (Nietzsche, in Pinar Autobiography 17-8)

> Philosophy in the old [linear] mode demythologizes and demystifies. . . . The revelation that philosophy finds nothingness at the end of its quest informs the new philosopher that mythmaking must be his central concern in order to make a world. (Bloom 208)

The progressive undermining of the foundations of Western culture has resulted in spiritual apathy (now taken for granted, at least in public schools), intellectual superficiality, and indifference on the part of our students. While Bloom's emphasis on the centrality of mythmaking may be ironic, his observations concerning the intellectual state of today's students are not.

> At worst, I fear that spiritual entropy or an evaporation of the soul's boiling blood is taking place, a fear that Nietzsche thought justified and made the center of all his thought. He argued that the spirit's bow was being unbent and risked being permanently unstrung. Its activity, he believed, comes from culture, and the decay of culture meant not only the decay of man in this culture but the decay of man simply. . . . Today's select students know so much less, are so much more cut off from

> the tradition, are so much slacker intellectually, that they make their predecessors look like prodigies of culture. (Bloom 51)

Western institutions, this chapter has suggested, may be understood as a response to the perceived threat of chaos and death. Our religious tradition, which sees death as alien, a curse resulting from the original sin, has placed Man in an adversarial relationship with nature. The linear world is inarguably one of profound ambivalence, as the same tradition which places this earth at the centre of the universe also shows it to be the realm of the prince of darkness. Man is alienated from his world as a result of the weakness of woman; nature, originally the perfect work of a benevolent Creator, now bears the marks of a curse; and work, once a cooperation with nature's cycles, is now a dreaded struggle which only the enemy--death itself--will bring to an end.

> And to the man He [Yahweh] said:
>
> 'Because you have listened to your wife and have eaten from the tree which I forbade you, accursed shall be the ground on your account. With labour you shall win your food from it all the days of your life. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, none but wild plants for you to eat. You shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground; for from it you were taken. Dust you are, to dust you shall return. (Gen 3:12-19)

Thus Man's own death is no longer seen as but one aspect of an eternally recurrent cycle (as in the archaic tradition); to the linear mind, death is the ultimate enemy, the "X" which marks the "end of the line," the ultimate of the curses placed on Man as a result of his disobedience to the word of Yahweh, one more reminder that Tiamat still lurks in the darkness which the light of reason is unable to banish.

Traditionally, the linear warrior was well armed and equal to this conflict with darkness. Knowing that he had Right on his side and that ultimate victory was assured, he could join the battle of life with some confidence. Yet the sword which has so effectively dispatched the pagan Goddess, which over the past few millennia has tirelessly struggled to establish Man's kingdom of light and order, has at last destroyed the foundation on which this kingdom was established.[5] The modern curriculum defines myth as falsehood, fiction, and the sword of the Word has been remarkably successful in its destruction of these ancient fictions. Yet the rational Hero failed to realize that the transcendental signified which gave meaning to his own enterprises is itself a fiction, and that the treasured individuality of the Hero himself is ultimately an unfolding collection of myths. The dawning of this realization has resulted in today's mythless erring.

> Now the first and most important effect of a living mythological symbol is to waken and give guidance to the energies of life. . . . However, when the symbols provided by the social group no longer work, and the

> symbols that do work are no longer of the group, the individual cracks away, becomes dissociated and disoriented, and we are confronted with what can only be named a pathology of the symbol. (Campbell Myths 89)

Linear myths, this chapter has suggested, seem to offer students an optimistic, progressive picture of the world. Like the Western religious tradition on which it rests, the linear curriculum affirms the order and predictability which has gradually but inexorably supplanted the shifting fictions of archaic cultures. Man, in driving the atavistic gods and goddesses from the earth, has established himself as the agent of the Father whose immutable Text reveals the underlying order of historical time. Yet it is becoming ever clearer to students and teachers alike that this gain has been more than offset by loss, that the Text which invests human existence with cosmic significance also tears our lives from the fabric of the world around us. While our emphasis on the immutability and universality of our own fictions has given our journey through time an appearance of purpose and order, it has also divided the world, setting Man in opposition to the beings around him, and ultimately cutting him off from the deeper layers of his own psyche.

As this chapter has sought to show, the anthropocentric myths of conflict and control which are fundamental to the Western religious tradition are central to the "modern," secular curriculum as well, and continue to shape students' images of themselves and to define their relationship with their world. Though the Father to which we once appealed as an anchor to secure our Texts against the ravages of time has--in the secular version of these myths--cloaked himself in the more appealing (to "modern" taste) garb of the sovereign rational ego, and seems at last to have deciphered the book of Nature itself, the fundamental themes remain much the same. Our continued emphasis on the veracity of our own fictions and the denigration of other less "rational" traditions--those which may well point the way to a restoration of the balance which our tradition has upset--represents a violation, as chapter three will show more clearly, of our own earliest memories of the meaning of time; meaning which lies, not in rationality and intellect, but in the body's relationship with the world. Not surprisingly, then, the curriculum as we experience it today has little to offer students seeking guidance on their journey through the labyrinth of life.

Yet it may well be that the sickness which is afflicting our mythological tradition holds within the promise of a cure. As this pathology (of which Joseph Campbell speaks and of which sensitive teachers are becoming increasingly aware) comes to stand in the place of our former sense of complacent well-being, an opening is offered for a revitalized understanding of the meaning of living-in-time. This will lead in turn to a revised understanding of the meaning of knowledge, one which again values the old myths, not as ultimate Truth in themselves, but as material for the inspiration of today's mythmakers.

The linear curriculum, with its denial of the interpretative role of teachers and students, emphasizes the separation of the trees of life and knowledge. An authentically temporal curriculum, one with room for the knowledge which derives from personal and community mythmaking, will take as its task the preparation of the soil so that the ancient world-tree may once again yield her healing fruit.

Chapter 3: The Labyrinth--Time and the Body

I. Introduction

Linear time, as chapter two has shown, is *historical* time; like the ship, my life takes on a sense of direction and purpose as it follows the course charted by the metaphorical "great Captain" whose map and compass establish a path across the trackless seas of chaos. This Captain is the transcendental signified, the ultimate source of all meaning, the bedrock to which the chain of linear history is attached.

I was reminded again of the symbolism of the sailboat during a recent visit to the student finance office of a Christian college. On the wall hangs a small reproduction showing an artist's conception of this Captain, in his billowing white robe, standing at the helm, guiding an antique schooner through surging waves and threatening reefs. To his right, the smaller figure of a teenage boy gazes intently into the darkness of the night. Though the vessel lurches and the winds howl, though in the distance another ship has run aground and is breaking up, the boy is serene. The calm sailing of childhood is at an end, students are reminded as they come to pay their bills, enquire about employment, and pick up their grades. Yet the great Captain is at the helm. He who has himself sailed these very seas and drawn up the map which offers the only sure guide, will see them through the storm.

It is significant, I believe, that in the secular version of this myth (the birthday card referred to in chapter two) the decks of the two sailboats are empty. The billowing robes of the great Captain would seem childish, somehow out of place in this context. As a middle-aged adult I seem to take on a large measure of responsibility for the course of the ship, even able at times to imagine that I am in complete command. Yet a guiding presence is felt nonetheless: though the scientific principles embodied in compass and map are generally assumed to be authorless, a part of the natural order, these apparently "neutral" instruments have distinct ideological overtones. The needle of the compass, the routes traced on the map, are clearly a part of the linear order, an interpretation imposed upon the chaotic text of experience, which leaves unasked an array of disturbing questions. Thus the purpose of the voyage, the final destination, the cargo, are determined by a larger-than-life figure who stands behind the tapestry of history to which my voyage promises to contribute a few essential threads.

This understanding of the meaning of existence is mirrored in our language, as shown in chapter two. Here too, a larger-than-life Word--the transcendental signified--has traditionally been assumed to stand behind and give meaning to the words through which we order our temporal experience.

> [Teacher:] "[T]rue learning must not be content with ideas, which are, in fact, signs, but must discover things in their individual truth. And so I would like to

> go back from this print of a print [an image of a unicorn in an ancient manuscript] to the individual unicorn that stands at the beginning of the chain. . . . But it isn't always possible in a short time, and without the help of other signs."
>
> [Pupil:] "Then I can always and only speak of something that speaks to me of something else, and so on. But the final something, the true one--does that never exist?"
>
> [Teacher:] "Perhaps it does: it is the individual unicorn. And don't worry: one of these days you will encounter it, however black and ugly it may be." (Eco 382)

In the linear tradition a transcendental Word is understood to lie behind the words through which we represent our temporal experience of Reality, and it is this Word which gives meaning to the historical drama. The part which I play in this drama may at times seem to be a page torn at random from a dictionary, a meaningless array of words. In the unifying light of the Word, however, which supplies both the missing context and the underlying grammar, the page of my life takes its place as a vital portion of the great Book of cosmic history.

Yet as chapter two suggests, the unicorn has at last been found, and black and ugly it is indeed: a gaping void where we sought a presence, a fiction where we expected ultimate Truth. The ship which was once guided unerringly on its course by the great Captain now seems to turn in meaningless spirals. The captain has withdrawn to his dreams while a drunken third mate allows the ship to run aground on the reef, covering the solid "bedrock" with slippery black ooze.[1] The map which once guided the ship even in the absence of the captain is now seen to be a picturesque fantasy, and even the origin and destination of the ship have been called into question. Myths, Joseph Campbell writes, have always served as maps to guide us on our voyage through life, megaliths which support the moral order. Today, however, with the loss of our foundational myths,

> . . . there follows uncertainty, and with uncertainty, disequilibrium, since life . . . requires life-supporting illusions; and where these have been dispelled, there is nothing secure to hold on to, no moral law, nothing firm. We have seen what has happened, for example, to primitive communities unsettled by the white man's civilization. . . .
>
> Today the same thing is happening to us. (Campbell Myths 9)

Rather than a linear voyage toward the harbor, the increasing loss of faith in our traditional maps seems to condemn us to aimless erring on the seas of time. What is needed, Nietzsche writes, is a new myth:

> Land! Land! Enough and more than enough of the wild and erring voyage over strange dark seas! At last a coast appears in sight: we must land on it whatever it may be like, and the worst of harbors is better than to go reeling back into a hopeless infinity of skepticism.

(Nietzsche Meditations, in Megill 80)

Today, however, there is no returning to the security of the sheltered port; what we need is not a linear map directing us to a fixed harbor, but a story to guide us in the course of our post-historical wanderings.

II. The Labyrinth: Guide to a Post-historical Temporality

> The shape of a cave, we say, or the shape of a labyrinth. The way we came here was dark. Space seemed to close in on us. . . . We had to leave all we brought with us. And when finally we moved through this narrow opening, our feet reached for ledges, under was an abyss, a cavern stretching farther than we could see. Our voices echoed off the walls. We were afraid to speak. This darkness led to more darkness, until darkness leading to darkness was all we knew.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Nothingness spreads around us. But in this nothing we find what we did not know existed. With our hands, we begin to trace faint images etched into the walls. And now, beneath these images we can see the gleam of older images. And these peel back to reveal the older still. . . . What we did not know existed but saw as children, our whole lives drawn here, image over image, past time, beyond space. (Dinnerstein Woman 159-60)

The labyrinth is an ancient image which promises insight into the meaning of post-historical time.[2] Before entering its winding corridors, however, the constraints of this study would seem to require a (somewhat paradoxical) consideration of the purpose of the journey.

The adjective "post-historical" itself suggests, in the context of the critique of linearity in chapter two, the impossibility of any sense of historical direction. If we are prepared to confront the possibility that the transcendental signified is a fiction--that our untiring search for foundational truths leads at last to myths--"logic" would seem to dictate that we embrace the ultimate conclusion that existence itself is devoid of meaning. Yet if historical time does not govern the post-historical labyrinth, neither does the inexorable "either-or" of linear logic. The existentialist urge to affirm the utter meaningless of existence, for example, often seems to be a particularly gloomy variant on the linear "heroic-Man-combats-chaos" theme. On the contrary, an admission that the fruits of our struggle with death and chaos--the texts and institutions which affirm the centrality of Man's role in history--are pompous constructs, clears the way for a recognition of the meaningfulness which is inherent in other aspects of life, the light as well as the dark.

In the classical Greek myth, a thread provided the clue to the meaning of the labyrinth. Since linear time is often characterized as patriarchal time, a one-sidedly masculine representation of temporal experience, it would be well to examine the possibilities inherent in this thread before entering the labyrinth. Specifically, as I suggested in the opening of chapter one, Ariadne's thread might more appropriately be used for weaving, an activity which is itself a "spiral dance" which mirrors the undulations of the labyrinth. Weaving, dancing: these and other rhythmic activities which engage the body as well as the mind may be studied as an introduction to the labyrinth.

The Body and the World

"Until the birth of my first child," a young mother relates, "I lived, not necessarily happily, but more or less unquestioningly, in linear time." With a college education and a demanding career (as a graphic designer for a New York publisher), she had felt that there was no place in her world of books and schedules for a baby ("the mess, the clutter, the personal untidiness . . . ") (Kahn 20-1). But, she writes:

> it didn't turn out the way I had feared. I had just come home from the hospital the day the milk came in; it was high summer. I sat out on our porch, admiring the nasturtiums, morning glories, . . . Like my body, everything seemed to be in full bloom. I watched a sea gull on an air current, a row of poplar trees lean away from the breeze, . . . and at the same time became aware of the surge of milk in my breasts. These different currents--of milk, of air, of the sap in the trees and water columns in the flowers--seemed to me to flow into one another, so that I became part of them and they part

> of me. (Kahn 21)

Although she soon found herself caught up in the routine of her job, a change in work schedule made it possible for her to return home in the early afternoons.

> After being at work, with deadlines, schedules and meetings, everything marked off by the clock, I would float with him [the baby] into a different kind of time. It was more cyclical, like the seasons, the tides, like the milk which kept its own appointment with him without my planning it out. (Kahn 21)

Kahn is suggesting something that each of us knows intuitively: that there is an original experience of time, one which precedes the imposed structuring of clocks and historical texts: the time of the body. This experience of time reestablishes the link with the Origin, the primordial time when chaos gave birth to life.

The experience of bodily time is not restricted to mothers, of course; for each of us, this sense of time-as-participation is a part of our first knowledge of the world (and may indeed be a part of our last). For the infant, life is an extension of the fetal "oceanic feeling," the cosmic anonymity represented mythologically by the garden of Eden (Berman 150-1); the young child, too, continues to live in a sort of primordial dream-time. Each of us is no doubt able to remember to some degree the magic of childhood time, which Traherne evokes in this passage from his *Centuries of Meditations*:

> The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never

> should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood everlasting to everlasting. . . . I knew not that [we] were born or should die; but all things abided eternally in their proper places. . . . The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven. The streets were mine, the temple was mine . . . The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the World was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it. (Century III, 1-3; in Paskow)

To the degree that the mother's experience with her baby draws her back into the time of the origin, it holds the potential to become an event of magical, almost mythical dimensions, having something of the Dionysian quality of a mysterious religious rite.[3] Of central importance to "primitive" religious experience is a recognition of the power inherent in the ritual return to the origin. By means of such rites, the inexorable linearity of time can be undone.

> To cure the work of time it is necessary to "go back" and find the "beginning of the World." (Eliade 88)

This source of ritual power, generally absent in our demythologized world, is rediscovered through participation in the time of the body. A black woman emphasizes her experience of this power and its importance for the often-marginalized mother:

> To me, having a baby inside me is the only time I'm really alive. I know I can make something, do something,

> no matter what color my skin is, and what names people call me. (Kahn 23)

While the power of bodily time may be explained as an actual "remembering" of the cosmic anonymity of the womb and early infancy, Jungian psychologists have suggested that its roots extend deeper yet, into the pre-history of the human race. In this view, each of us is born with a "memory deposit," a collection of primary images or archetypes built up in the course of millennia of experience of the material world. These memories, like the newborn chick's knowledge of the hawk, lie dormant, waiting to be aroused by the appropriate "silhouette":

> The image of the inherited enemy is already sleeping in the nervous system, and along with it the well-proven reaction. Furthermore, even if all the hawks in the world were to vanish, their image would still sleep in the soul of the chick . . . (Campbell Primitive 31)

Similarly, human beings "remember" their primordial fears of dangerous animals and storms, the relationship between the annual rebirth of the world and the cycles of the celestial luminaries, the bliss of original oneness; these and other archetypes retain the power to break into consciousness, drawing us into the magic of mythological time.

The mother's sojourn with her child in the primordial garden thus takes us even further back in time, engaging us in mythical participation in all such experiences of original oneness: the undifferentiated consciousness of the earliest proto-human beings, the amniotic harmony of life in earth's primal seas, even in the unity of time and space which preceded the big bang.

Yet in what sense is the mother's experience our experience? What meaning does this return to the "beginning of the World"--which was once an essential aspect of religious experience--have for us (as parents and teachers) and, in particular, for our students? This study will show the clear link between mesocosm and macrocosm, between our experience of the body and our understanding of our place in the universe. Thus it will be seen that a recognition of the importance of the body's experience of time, and of the role of woman in the mediation of its mysteries, will alter our traditional images of both the self and the cosmos. Though I will never give birth, I nonetheless "remember" the archetypes associated with birth and death, and sense within that which I naively refer to as my "self" the repressed power of those original memories.

The Body and the Self

The linear mind, as shown in chapter two, appears in its official guise as a self-sufficient monad, a hero of light whose appointed task is the subjugation of the earth. In the course of the mundane drudgery where it is most likely to be encountered, however, this "heroic" self is a rather morose entity, haunted by unfulfillable desire. Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich might be considered as one example of such a being, a man whose life "had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible" (Tolstoy 1615).

Stereotypical images are distinctly unsatisfying when measured against the living diversity of actual human beings, yet many of us will recognize in ourselves (or perhaps more readily in our acquaintances) aspects of this complacent "hero," whose loftiest goals are those set by anonymous figures of authority, who seeks validation of his aspirations in the equally anonymous voice of public opinion. In his youth, Tolstoy writes, Ivan was

> just what he remained for the rest of his life: a capable, cheerful, good-natured, and sociable man, though strict in the fulfillment of what he considered to be his duty: and he considered his duty to be what was so considered by those in authority. (1616)

Cut off from the real meaning of time by his unquestioning submission to an imposed temporal structure, Ivan is wholly dependent upon this structure for his sense of personal worth. When the flow of linear time is interrupted--during a prolonged vacation in the countryside--his carefully constructed fictional self begins to disintegrate.

> In the country, without his work, he experienced _ennui_ for the first time in his life, and not only _ennui_ but intolerable depression, and he decided that it was impossible to go on living like that, and that it was necessary to take energetic measures. . . .
>
> Next day, despite many protests from his wife and her brother, he started for Petersburg with the sole object of obtaining a post with a salary of five thousand rubles

> a year. (1622)

This fictional self has, as this chapter will show, rejected the authentic materialism of the body's sense of time. This rejection is, indeed, required of us by a society which emphasizes our detachment from all that might serve as a reminder of our original helplessness, our deep roots in the maternal darkness to which we must one day return. Yet ultimately, in turning away from these roots, we reject a part of ourselves, a darker twin who can never be entirely forgotten.

> This stratum [the holistic knowledge of the body] is hardly a developmental; it is the ground of our being, and unlike the ego, does not need cultural factors to trigger it. No amount of civilization can eradicate it, and the scientific attempt to do so can only drive us to drink. (Berman 166)

In her place, the "Father" offers a dazzling mirror-image of an ideal self whose brilliance banishes the earthy reality of the darker twin. This image is, however, a culturally defined fiction: ever-unattainable, yet ever the object of our pursuit.

The patriarchal rejection of the body's original experience of time has, then, created a void, a gaping hole which the demythologized rationalism which has come to characterize Western thought has proven unable to fill. Today this "ideal" self is most often defined by the powerful mirror of the media; yet the cars, clothes, and other attributes which it offers to fill this void are even less suited to the task than are the symbols of traditional religion. Thus the linear self is defined in terms of lack, becoming the locus of impossible desires whose driving force originates in the body, yet whose only acceptable objects are alluring, yet essentially unsatisfying, substitutes for the original knowledge which we are denied (Silverman 151,176).

The child begins to acquire the names for these objects --to learn the language of her impossible desire--even as the time of the body is suppressed, replaced by the arbitrary clock-time of scheduled breast-feeding and toilet-training.

> Between Emily [the baby] and her mother comes an advice book, a cultural voice, which tells her to nurse by the clock. Both she and Emily suffer from the disruption of a more organic state of nurture. Emily's cries "battered me to trembling and my breasts ached with swollenness," but she "waited until the clock decreed." (Kahn 22)

Though the fetus dwells in a state of eternal bliss which corresponds to the original garden, the trauma of birth is followed by unpredictable cycles of presence and absence, an alternation between the delights of heaven and the torments of hell, each of them an eternity to a being who has no notion of temporal finitude, but for whom now is always. When the mother is absent, Joseph Campbell writes,

> the universe is absent; the bliss of the blessed infant imbibing forever the ambrosia of the madonna's body is gone forever. (Primitive 68)

Such cycles are to a degree inevitable, a part of the reality of living in a world where the mother is, unlike the divine ideal, neither omnipotent nor omnipresent; yet they have been exacerbated, and made the focus of modern childhood, by our insistence on the priority of the clock over the rhythms of the body.

Experiences of imposed separation play a key role in the development of the isolated sense of self which we take for granted but which some writers consider to be a recent psychological aberration: that isolated monad known as the "ego." The sense of self-identity which accompanies the emergence of the ego has, of course, positive aspects which need not be argued here. Yet along with this insistence on separation and identity comes loss: compelled to leave the garden and enter the kingdom of books and clocks, we find ourselves naked and ashamed, forced to conceal our spiritual emptiness beneath the cloak of a persona, a fictive self which enables us to play our assigned role in the cosmic drama of linear history. Just as the rash adolescent often rejects his parents, cutting himself off from the wisdom of their experience, so the coming of the andromorphous gods of light represents a rejection of the ancient wisdom of the body, and while it is the "Father," the anonymous authority-figure of the linear order, who decrees this loss and separation, it is the mother who--in the eyes of the child--must bear the guilt (Dinnerstein *Mermaid* 119f). Thus the once-powerful feminine trinity of body, earth, and moon become, not simply lesser members of the pantheon, but the abode of demons, relegated to the "outer darkness," place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13 KJV).

Mind Over Matter

When seen from the perspective of the eons over which the archetypal "memories" of the body's own sense of time have been built up and reinforced, our traditional uneasiness with the body and its store of knowledge is a relatively recent phenomenon. Traces of this uneasiness are nonetheless evident from the dawn of recorded history, and a few of the more influential examples may be noted. In his Symposium, Plato (c. 427-347 B.C.) stresses the nobility of heavenly love--a spiritual virtue--which he contrasts with the baseness of physical love.

> The Love who is the offspring of the common Aphrodite is essentially common, and has no discrimination, being such as moves the meaner sort of men. They are apt to love women as well as youths, and the body rather than the soul . . . But the offspring of the heavenly Aphrodite is derived from a mother in whose birth the female has no part,--she is from the male only; . . . Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant and intelligent nature; . . . (175b-e)

The neoplatonism of Plotinus (Roman philosopher, 205?-270 A.D.) is of particular interest because of its influence on the writings of Augustine (the early Christian theologian quoted at length in chapter two). While his anti-materialism is even more straightforward, his misogyny is obvious, yet more subtle and therefore more insidious: matter, it must be kept in mind, is derived etymologically from mater, the mother, the primordial Tiamat from whose body Marduk constituted the material universe.

> Matter--feebler far than the Soul for any exercise of power, and possessing no phase of the Authentic Existents, not even in possession of its own falsity--lacks the very means of manifesting itself, utter void as it is; it becomes the means by which other things appear, but it cannot announce its own presence. Penetrating thought may arrive at it, . . . then, it is discerned as something abandoned by all that really is, by even the dimmest semblants of being . . . (Plotinus, Enneads, para. 15; in Irigary 176)

> This, I think, is why the doctors of old, teaching through symbols and mystic representations, exhibit the ancient Hermes with the generative organs always in active posture [!]; this is to convey that the generator of things of sense is the Intellectual Reason-Principle: the sterility of Matter, eternally unmoved, is indicated by the eunuchs surrounding it in its representation as the All-Mother. (para. 19, in Irigary 179)

This image of active, penetrating thought juxtaposed with the passive "void" of matter is particularly striking, and is typical of the countless examples of sexual and intellectual hierarchization which Irigary cites from Western thought.

Our traditional antipathy toward the material reality of the body (which goes hand in hand with a depreciation of the feminine) has been accompanied by an increasingly vigilant regulation of the body's time and space. In archaic societies, children had almost constant physical contact with the mother or another family member; this practice is the norm in many mon-Western cultures even today. In Bali, for example,

> the child is carried on the hip or in a sling, in almost constant contact with the mother for the first two years of life. During the first six months it is never not in someone's arms except while being bathed . . . . (Berman 159)

In such societies, as was the case in Europe during the Middle Ages, this contact extends to unembarrassed sexual play;

> public physical contact with children's private parts was an amusing sort of game, forbidden only when the child reached puberty. (Berman 159)

During the Renaissance, however, this relaxed attitude toward the body began to change; with Man's burgeoning sense of control over the natural world and a growing ascendancy of mind over matter, the body became an increasing source of shame and embarrassment.

> The seventeenth century literally "discovered" childhood, and made a point of demarcating it as a stage in a series of separate phases of life. Far from implying greater care of infants, however, this demarcation involved

> greater alienation from them. . . . [T]here suddenly emerged a great preoccupation with the supposed dangers of touching and body contact. . . . The result was that the adult became a sort of psychic watchdog, always supervising the child but never fondling it . . . (Berman 160)

The uneasiness caused by the material reality of our own bodies is clearly manifested in our urgency to mask its natural functions and odors, and by the social and legal restrictions which circumscribe our physical associations. Repudiating the "lunar time" of the body, our culture has scheduled it into submission to the rational "solar time" of the intellect. Not surprisingly, this repression of the body seems to have resulted in a variety of aberrations--the irritability, anxiety, and existential anomie considered "normal" in our society--and has been shown to lead to death in cases of extreme sensory deprivation in young children (Berman 162,4). More to the point, however, is the possibility that the denial of the body and its innate sense of time, and the concomitant scheduling and regulation of physical contact, have cut us off from a fundamental experience of the world which for millennia constituted a vital source of temporal knowledge: the loss of the body has, to put it bluntly, resulted in the loss of the maternal matrix which gave birth to and nourished our mythological tradition. Even our work and recreational pursuits no longer offer the link between body and world which they once did.

In societies where this link has been preserved, physical labor offers a means of participating directly in the primordial rhythm.

> The man [sic] who does creative work with his hands with the intervention of only simple tools takes part in a rhythm conditioned by nature. Carpenters and shoemakers of old were, in their trades, part of a world of rhythmic existence to which they subjected themselves in awe and satisfaction. The rhythm of work contributed an element of intimacy, largely missing in our present epoch. (Meerloo 241)

The Dark of the Moon

Clearly, such an understanding of the inherent rhythm of work is absent from the life of Ivan Ilyich. As he goes in search of a new position, he

> was no longer bent on any particular department, or tendency, or kind of activity. All he now wanted was an appointment to another post with a salary of five thousand rubles . . . (Tolstoy 1622)

Yet inevitably the time of the body reasserts itself, in the unwelcome guise of the "uncanny guest:" an unexpected illness and the specter of death itself. Only the black hole which results from the total collapse of his temporal structure--as Ivan faces his own imminent death--is able to give birth to a consciousness which at last "remembers" the primordial sense of time which is the common heritage of every child. The dark tunnel of fear leads him, through the full cycle of temporal experience, back to the primordial garden.

> For three whole days, during which time did not exist for him, he struggled in that black sack into which he was being thrust by an invisible, resistless force. . . . And every moment he felt that despite all his efforts he was drawing nearer and nearer to what terrified him. He felt that his agony was due to his being thrust into that black hole and still more to his not being able to get right into it. . . .
>
> Suddenly some force struck him in the chest and side, making it still harder to breathe, and he fell through the hole and there at the bottom was a light. . . .
>
> "So that's what it is!" he suddenly exclaimed aloud. "What joy!" . . .
>
> He drew in a breath, stopped in the midst of a sigh, stretched out, and died. (1654-5)

Many of us, like Ivan Ilyich, spend our lives attempting to escape from a particularly persistent childhood memory. Like Ivan, perhaps an encounter with the darker side of the body's sense of time will help us "see the light." "Holism haunts modern man," Berman writes; the memory of original time

> tugs unmercifully at his consciousness. Despite the way he is forced to live, he still hears that preconscious echo, "I am my environment." . . . [I]n infancy he tasted the fruit of the tree of life, and knows that it is good, and never forgets. (166)

Yet this Eden is a realm of *darkness*, and life's first great trauma is the entry into the *light*. Our traditional hierarchization of light/dark, good/evil is generally taken for granted. Yet this, too, can be questioned. Is the dark indeed evil, or does it, rather, offer a (to the mind schooled in the Western tradition) disturbing reminder of the primordial "chaos" which is our original and final home?[4]

The body's own experience of time teaches that there is an element of mystery in the cycles of nature which escapes our control. While the one-sided linear emphasis on the intellect seems to place us beyond these cycles, bodily time is a constant reminder of our bond with the material world, an affirmation that our fate is connected to that of the other living beings with whom we share this corner of time and space. While linear culture teaches us to flee death, archaic societies lived daily with reminders that it is inescapable, and that without death there is no life. These social systems, grounded (as anthropology and archaeology now show) on the symbolic order of the goddess, embraced not only the light, but the darkness as well.

> The image of the mother and the female affects the psyche differently from that of the father and male. Sentiments of identity are associated most immediately with the mother; those of dissociation, with the father. Hence, where the mother image preponderates, even the dualism of life and death dissolves in the rapture of her solace; the worlds of nature and the spirit are not separated . .

. (Campbell Occcidental 70)

Many modern writers, too, have recognized the important role played by an awareness of our finitude. As the German poet R. M. Rilke writes:

> Nature, however, knew nothing of this banishment [of death] which we have somehow managed to accomplish--when a tree blossoms, death blooms in it as well as life; every field is full of death . . . (Selected Letters, in Leonard 138)

Perhaps above all, Martin Heidegger comes to mind in any study of the centrality of death in existential thought.

> But what is it that touches us directly out of the widest orbit? What is it that remains blocked off, withdrawn from us by ourselves in our ordinary willing to objectify the world? It is the other draft: Death. Death is what touches mortals in their nature, and so sets them on their way to the other side of life . . . Death thus gathers into the whole . . . (Poetry 126)
>
> The time remains destitute not only because God is dead, but because mortals are hardly aware and capable even of their own mortality. (Poetry 96)

Death and Woman

While these male writers take death as a subject of their meditations, however, they are inclined to overlook the ancient knowledge that it is above all woman who lives in her body the inseparability of life and death. In the experience of childbirth and labor, a woman enters into the meaning of these two opposites. In spite of modern medicine, labor remains a potentially life-threatening drama, an entry via the body into the limits of time.

> The relentless rhythm of her contractions takes over the function of time-keeping, submerges objective, clock time in the eternity of bodily time . . . This endless rhythm, like the succession of waves at the shore, the murmur of our breathing, the drumbeat of the heart, is a living symbol of a timeless, endless world. To allow oneself to be absorbed by this rhythm is to pass through that gateway . . . and to emerge from it a changed being . . . (Meg Fox 127)

This gateway is the entrance into the garden which, in the patriarchal tradition, is guarded by the flaming sword of the fearsome angel of death (Gen. 3:24). The experience of the mother shows, however, that it is possible to pass through this gateway, to reenter the edenic garden of primordial time. Yet the nursing mother--sharing this timeless garden with her child--bears with her the knowledge of the pain and darkness which precede the joy of birth. The priesthood of the medical profession has, as feminists have shown, conspired to minimize the Dionysian quality of natural childbirth, whether simply in the name of efficiency, or out of deep-seated fear of the knowledge and power with which this experience endows woman.

> It is all too easy in our culture to reduce birth to a mere physical function, and to discount the importance or relevance of the psychic experience of the mother . . .

> As a culture, we may accept that some few women seem to find in childbirth an experience of mystical dimensions, though it makes us as uncomfortable as all other mystical and religious experiences. . . .
>
> The woman in labor must be made to reify and to share the medical time-bound perception of labor . . . . In so far as it succeeds in this task, medicalized childbirth has no knowledge of the passion or ecstasy of birth, of its freedom and creativity. We would empty the actual act of meaning, and yet continue to use the words which describe it as metaphors for acts of the intellect and imagination. . . .
>
> Emerging from the birth experience, one feels changed, as the artist in the achievement of her creation remakes the person she had been. (Meg Fox 128)

The self which emerges from a woman's participation in the time of the body is inseparable from her identification with the rhythms of nature. Childbirth moves the mother out of solar time and into lunar time. Like the moon which (in the course of her monthly phases) "dies and is resurrected and moreover influences, in some mysterious way still unknown, the lunar cycle of the womb" (Campbell Primitive 180), the mother takes her place in the cosmic cycles of light and darkness. Childbirth is indeed an experience of life, one which leads into primordial joy of the garden, yet this brutal encounter with bodily time embraces death as well. Immersed in these cosmic rhythms, past and future melt away, and even the rigid frame which delimits the objective self begins to dissolve in the ebbs and flows of the tide of life.

The peace and contentment which the nursing mother reports as a result of her immersion in this flood of life seems to point the way to a better understanding of death. Standing in a field of grass and flowers on a day in midsummer, I too have felt myself immersed in this flood of life, and at the same time felt the truth and beauty of Rilke's words: "death blooms in it as well." Staring into the immense blackness of the night sky, we begin to recall the primordial power of the original darkness.

> The womb was dark and not fearful. . . . Much of the birth of the cosmos itself was done in the dark--the sun has not always existed. The seed under ground is growing in the dark no less than the fetus in the mother's womb. . . . These are our origins, the very holy origin of our original being, our original blessedness. (Matthew Fox 135-6)

Similarly, Rilke writes:

> You darkness, that I come from,
> I love you more than all the fires
> that fence in the world,
> . . . . . .
> I have faith in nights. (in Matthew Fox 152)

The man or woman who has had such an experience has begun to glimpse the meaning of the waning and ebbing which inexorably close the cycle of life, as both mind and body dissolve in the current of cosmic time; the body returning to mother earth, consciousness plunging back into the vast pool whence it came, as "the salt doll walks into the ocean" (Campbell Inner Reaches 73).

Echoing this thought, Emily Dickinson compares her life to the growth and death of the grass:

And even when it dies, to pass
In odours so divine,
Like lowly spices lain to sleep,
Or spikenards perishing.

And then in sovereign barns to dwell,
And dream the days away,--
The grass so little has to do,
I wish I were a hay.
(Dickinson 90)

To the extent that a woman refuses to allow drugs and artificial timing to draw her out of the unique sense of temporality which is a part of the experience of childbirth, to the extent that she is permitted to participate in its primitive brutality, she emerges from this "rite" with a unique understanding of the meaning of beginnings and endings, with a knowledge which gives new insight into our traditional myths. Even those of us who will never bear children can participate in this experience of time which, as our study of childbirth seems to show, arises most dramatically in the course of an encounter with the limits of the ordered world of linear time. Unscheduled, rhythmic physical activities (such as painting, skiing, and gardening, in my experience), have the potential to interrupt the mind-numbing flow of linear scheduling, and thus offer a degree of insight into a more fundamental sense of time, body, and world. Nearer to this limit are the striking reminders of original temporality which sometimes occur in the semi-conscious moments spent between dreaming and waking, and in the mythological realm of the dreams themselves. Our "dark nights of lovemaking," too, draw us back into original time, remind us of the blessed darkness of our origins, break down the artificial barrier between self and other. Equally powerful, as those who have experienced it would affirm, is the return to the Origin which is a part of archaic ritual (such as the sweatlodge). At the farthest edge of the rational world, near-death experiences offer a dramatic insight into the primordial meaning of time (not unlike the breakdown of the linear order which occurs during childbirth), as the conscious mind reaches the edges of its domain, and linear time begins to dissolve.

A voyage toward the limits of the controlled, rational world of linear time--whether in the gentleness of work and dreams, or through the primitive brutality of childbirth and death--offers a glimpse into a more primordial experience of time, a knowledge of the foundation of temporal meaning which, as we emerge from the experience itself and pause to reflect upon it, is a prerequisite for the mythmaking which unites the raw power of the body with the reflective, creative potential of the mind.

Only one who has lifted the lyre
Among shadows too,
May divining render
The infinite praise.

Only who with the dead has eaten
Of the poppy that is theirs,
Will never again lose
The most delicate tone.

(Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, in Leonard 137)

As we step outside the linear order we encounter directly the sacredness and meaningfulness of life, and are thus better able to reconsider our own temporal and material priorities. Our search for an understanding of time which is prior to this order began with the world and turned inward, seeking the meaning of the self. Yet the breakdown of linear time entails, as was shown, the dissolution of the self as well. Decentered, ever expanding, this self begins to reach out, beyond the ego-/ethno-centrism of linear time, to embrace the cosmos.

The Body and the Curriculum

> Man [sic], apparently, cannot maintain himself in the universe without belief in some arrangement of the general inheritance of myth. In fact, the fullness of his life would even seem to stand in a direct ratio to the depth and range not of his rational thought but of

his local mythology. (Campbell Primitive 4)

Linear thought, as noted in chapter two, recognizes the importance of our mythological heritage, yet fails to understand that living-in-time is a dynamic, creative enterprise. In its urgency to affirm that this heritage is immutable Truth, it has refused to drink of the effervescent water of life, to eat of the fruit of the world-tree. The body's participation in time points the way back to the garden; not to the oceanic oblivion of infancy, but to an experience of life and knowledge mediated by creative play within the open script of the cosmic comedy.

If a curriculum is to be developed which will allow the creative growth of our mythological tradition, knowledge must be understood as originating in body as well as mind. The linear curriculum posits an ego which is a fictive construct whose objective reality it must constantly reaffirm. Its heroic view of time--its urgent flight from death and anxious affirmation of the immutable veracity of its traditional myths--is reflected in its image of a divided, egocentric self, in the inferior status accorded to matter, body, and woman (which become passive objects to be manipulated by the active intellect), and in the traditional closed, mechanistic, geo-/helio-centric universe (and corresponding androcentric moral order). The validity of all these models has recently been challenged (by the social and natural sciences, and even by contemporary theology), but the decline of the old has left a vacuum which the pseudomaterialism of a consumer-oriented culture has been unable to fill.[5]

An authentic materialism, one which has its roots in the body's experience of the world, offers an understanding of knowledge which reflects the powerful, yet disconcerting, images of a cosmos which has been decentered physically as well as morally and psychologically. This new cosmos, as proposed by modern science, seems to offer an exhilarating sense of freedom; yet, released from bondage of the ancient captain and his maps, we now free ourselves free to wander aimlessly, ready to turn in despair to anything which promises a readymade sense of direction.

Myth can, if read through the "eyes" of the body, once again offer us a sense of direction. Perhaps not a map directing us to the security of a familiar port, this reading of myth offers nonetheless a "guide, stage by stage, in health, strength, and harmony of spirit, through the whole foreseeable course of a useful life" (Campbell _Myths_ 222), a thread to guide us through the labyrinth of time. Even more importantly, however, an encounter with the time of the body teaches the meaning of _writing_, the creative myth-making through which (as chapter five will show) we begin to trace a path through passages which the linear curriculum has forgotten.

The Post-historical Cosmos

My search for an alternative to the rigid metaphors which dominated my own experience of education has, then led me to propose a reconsideration of an ancient symbol of lunar time: the labyrinth. The labyrinth has been alluded to repeatedly throughout this study as an alternate model of time, admittedly one among many, yet one which is rooted in the immediacy of the experience of the body. The labyrinth, which we can now explore at greater leisure, makes explicit the connection between our most ancient mythological traditions and the important feminine dimension of time (which is neglected in the patriarchal rationalizing of the linear tradition), thus restoring it to its proper place and connecting it to dynamic archetypes which have been banished from the linear world. The labyrinth suggests an open model of knowledge, one which mirrors the de-centered, post-heliocentric model of the cosmos, and which points to the role of both light and dark, mind and body, work and play, in a balanced curriculum. Finally, the labyrinth restores an element of temporal "polytheism" to our obsessively monotheistic world (whose cult has finally been reduced to the worship of the Self).

Visitors to Chartres cathedral, southwest of Paris, can walk the spiral paths of a huge labyrinth inscribed in the paving-stones of the floor, in the centre of the nave. This cathedral, as guides sometimes hint, was, like many other Christian holy places, erected on the ruins of an earlier pagan shrine. Feminist archaeology suggests that the labyrinth in this cathedral is a copy, on the original site and in the original size, of an observatory sacred to the moon-goddess. Such observatories were once common in Europe and the Near East; their remains, made of grass or stone, can still be found in remote areas (Goettner-Abendroth 108f). Constructed in the form of a labyrinth, these mystical spirals mimicked the movement of the moon-goddess herself,

> who seems to travel in a spiral leftwards around the earth until she stands full and round in the zenith in the middle of the sky, and then seems to spiral to the right until she disappears near the sun as the new moon. (Goettner-Abendroth 110)

These labyrinthine observatories were used as a means of tracing the heavenly cycles, and served to regulate the community's agricultural and religious activities. Perhaps even more importantly, however, they were the site of ritual dances in celebration of the celestial pantheon. As initiates danced through the spiral, they imitated the movements of the moon-goddess herself, whose phases (which keep time to the dancers' own biological cycles) point to her symbolic identification with both light and darkness, birth and death (Goettner-Abendroth 109f).

Because of the concurrence of her cycles with the rhythm of the woman's bodily time, the moon was the obvious timekeeper in early agrarian societies. Her monthly rhythm links the entire cosmos in a spiral dance of beginning and ending, birth and death, which form the fabric of human temporality.

> In India, the lunar calendar, possibly one of the first of its type, is still in use today. The month is divided into two fourteen-day periods . . . with the full moon

> standing as a cosmic representation of pregnancy, and the new moon standing for the promise of rebirth. These beliefs are apparently universal, for the lunar markings found on prehistoric bone fragments are thought by many to represent women's cycles. (Dudley, in Grahn 268)
>
> The lunar calendar was followed by the stellar, or star-based, calendar and only recently has time been reckoned by the sun . . . (Grahn 268)

The transition from lunar to solar time marks the ascendancy of the male, the assertion of his control over the cycles of nature, and a forgetting of the inherent power of bodily time. With this transition comes the end of our direct connection with earth and sky which nourished the tree of life and knowledge. In place of the fruits of this tree--myths and rituals which grew naturally form an experience of our role in the cosmic mystery--the fortifications of linear myth were erected on the forgotten foundations of ancient shrines to the body. Cast in immutable concrete, their impregnable walls serve as a shelter against the ravages of the cosmos of which we no longer feel ourselves a part.

Even with the coming of solar chronology (which can be dated to around 3000 B.C., roughly coinciding with the origins of writing), the labyrinth retained its power as a symbol of the body's experience of time. In ancient Egypt, the labyrinth served as a pattern both for the tombs of kings and for temples to Osiris (god of the underworld). While in the case of the tombs, the labyrinth design may have functioned as a defense against intruders, the evidence points more strongly to the symbolic value of this motif. As a reminder of the temporal cycles of the body, the labyrinth was patterned after the internal organs, and was thought of, in particular, as a symbol of the womb to which the dead king has returned (Campbell Primitive 69). The labyrinths sacred to Osiris were the stage for the yearly enactment of the drama of the god's death and resurrection which was associated with a number of ritual dances (Deedes 15-23; Campbell Primitive 426). In these celebrations, a bull representing the god was slain and dismembered in the labyrinthine sanctuary.

This celebration of the cycles of life, death, and rebirth, and the related ritual dances performed in the spiral of the labyrinth, suggest a direct connection with archaic moon-goddess traditions. Even the bull--venerated in ancient Mesopotamia as the "animal of the moon: the waning and waxing god . . . ; lord of tides and the productive powers of the earth, the lord of women, lord of the rhythm of the womb"--is a reminder of domain of the moon-goddess and is clearly related to the Egyptian cow-goddess Hathor, whose body (like that of Tiamat) forms the firmament, who devours the sun each evening and gives birth to him each dawn (Campbell Occidental 59-60).

Yet though the bull points unmistakably to earlier gynolatric traditions, his coming as a symbol of divine potency marks a significant theological transition, one which reflects the psychological stresses which accompanied shifting patterns of domestic life. With the introduction of grain cultivation and animal breeding (around eleven thousand years ago) our relationship with nature--and thus with one another--began to change as well.

> . . . when people gather or hunt it feels like a game. When they farm it is seen as work . . . . More people living closer together produce increased tensions . . .
>
> Evidently human psychology was drastically changed, a process which intensified with time. Nature was personified and came to be seen as an adversary. . . . Anxiety and aggression increased, and new forms of religion arose to assuage the new insecurities. (Fisher 188)
>
> In gathering and hunting societies, even in some societies where animal keeping is of recent arrival, there is a sense of kinship between animals and humans. . . . Now humans violated animals by making them their slaves. In taking them in and feeding them, humans first made friends with animals and then killed them. To do so, they had to kill some sensitivity in themselves. (Fisher 196-7)

In the course of these changes Man comes to see that he does indeed have a role to play in the cycles of nature. While the earliest cultures apparently had no knowledge of the relationship between sexual intercourse and birth, farming and animal breeding provide important clues. Yet the latter shows as well the relative unimportance of the male--most are either neutered and enslaved or killed and eaten.

The former, on the other hand, furnishes a "pernicious analogy" (Fisher) which provides the male with a degree of psychological compensation: the womb becomes the passive field waiting to be tilled and impregnated by the precious male seed.

The centuries of accumulated male anxieties are clearly reflected in much of classical mythology, and in particular in the changing imagery associated with the labyrinth. The terrible Minotaur which blocks access to the centre is the metaphorical progeny of the Mesopotamian bull, and may ultimately be traced back to the benign cosmic cow. The story of Theseus is situated in Crete, whose gynolatric traditions represent a very early stage of Bronze Age civilization, a "milder, gentler day" which preserved many of the archaic goddess traditions (Campbell Occidental 62). Yet in the later Greek reading of these traditions an important shift has occurred. Clearly ill at ease in the lunar penumbra, to the Greek mind the labyrinth has become a place of terror and death, abode of the monster (not unlike Cronus, god of time and implacable devourer of his own children) whom the hero must slay.

> Each year, seven Athenian youths and seven maidens had to be fed to the Minotaur. To put an end to this horror, Theseus, son of Aegeus, the king of Athens journeyed to Crete to slay the uncanny creature. On Crete, Ariadne met Theseus and immediately fell in love with him. Her love led her to reveal to Theseus the secret of the

> labyrinth, which Daedalus had imported to her. The granddaughter of Helios [i.e., Ariadne] gave Theseus a thread that enabled him to find and kill the "monster in midweb" and escape from the labyrinth. (Mark Taylor 61)

This Greek account of Theseus' wanderings is a striking image of Western Man's travels through the labyrinth of time. Cut off from the time of the body, the labyrinth is no longer a place of ritual and dance, but has become a dark maze where all paths lead to death. Unable to endure his aimless wandering, Western Man has devised a thread, the linear narrative of history, as a means of conquering the temporal Minotaur (Mark Taylor 62f). This thread has come to define knowledge in terms of linearity and closure. The thread unifies, encloses, binds together. Wrapped around and around the cosmic labyrinth, it constitutes a vital illusion of meaning and pattern. With the threads of linear time, Man has built himself a sheltered cocoon offering a measure of security, protection, and above all, meaning. In his illusory quest to conquer death, Man seeks to enthrone himself, rather than the devouring demon of time, at the centre of the labyrinth.

Yet if the value of myth lies in its role as a "guide . . . through the labyrinth of time," linear history constitutes a fundamental misunderstanding of this role. The creativity and openness of the lunar dance, where meaning and pattern emerge as each participant--drawing, of course, on the wisdom of those who have gone before--is encouraged to thread her own way, to find her own path of meaning through the spiral, is replaced by the highway of linear time, where one broad path offers readymade meaning for all.

Like a classical dramatic plot, the story of solar time has a beginning, moves toward a theatrical climax, and will ultimately close with the hero's victory over the powers of darkness. Repeating ad infinitum the ancient Mesopotamian cosmogony, generation after generation of heroic Marduks must slay the ancient serpent, Tiamat--"dragon-mother of all creation"--and from her carcass attempt to make a universe free from the reminders of Man's original and final nothingness. Yet the suppression of the maternal darkness, the rejection of the knowledge represented by the serpentine spiral of the labyrinth, has meant that the solar cosmos is haunted by a nightmare which stalks its shadowless streets.

> Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being--like a worm. (Sartre 107)

Sartre has aptly described the anguish of life in a divided world. Like the dark spiral of the labyrinth in the midst of the splendor of the great cathedral, like the serpent lurking at the heart of the Garden, the memory of original time haunts Man, its repressed wholeness transformed into a yawning void, a black hole grown larger than the cathedral itself.

While this image of the lunar labyrinth is a fundamentally psychological statement about the temporal position of Man, it draws important support from a parallel image of the physical universe. Man, the literal image of

God, traditionally located himself at the centre of the cosmos, surrounded by a series of concentric crystalline spheres, and finally by the beneficient, all-encompassing presence of God. Today these crystalline spheres have been shattered, and the idea of a cosmic centre has become an impossible fiction. To modern astronomy, the centre is both everywhere and nowhere. With the increasing impersonality of the official myths which fix the limits of meaningful knowledge, the crystal cocoon has become a puzzling maze. The multiple threads of history have become hopelessly tangled, and the children of Theseus seem destined to become endless wanderers. With their rudders "deconstructed" and their maps transformed into quaint fictions, our institutional juggernauts continue to inscribe hopeful tracks on the sea of chaos; yet the maps and charts which once set the course have gradually been discredited, discarded as meaningless fictions, especially by those who see themselves as unwilling passengers. One high school student (asked to write about "whatever is going through your mind just now") recently described his voyage in this way:

> i'm out walking now. i stride down the well beaten path to nothingwhere, mywhere. i feel the cold sensation of death at my back and . . . i'm back in schooool again. think. do. boored. i drift in and out from therewhere to herewhere. black, black, black. nothing. nothing. (Lloyd, Jan. 1989; see chapter four for more information on this student.)

The Cosmic Library

Yet the rupture of the thread of linear history points as well to the more fundamental role of the labyrinth as an image of our place in the cosmos. With the old maps exposed as fictions, "myths," the post-historical curriculum[6] becomes, not a newer, better map, but rather a vast library, itself a labyrinth, one which in its mind-numbing complexity mirrors the post-Newtonian cosmos.

> The universe (which others call the library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast air shafts between, surrounded by very low railings. From any of the hexagons one can see, interminably, the upper and lower floors. The distribution of the galleries is invariable. Twenty shelves, five long shelves per side, cover all the sides except two; their height, which is the distance from floor to ceiling, scarcely exceeds that of a normal bookcase. One of the free sides leads to a narrow hallway which opens onto another gallery, identical to the first and to all the rest. . . . [T]hrough here passes a spiral stairway, which sinks abysmally and soars upwards to remote distances. In the hallway there is a mirror which faithfully duplicates all appearances. Men usually infer from this mirror that the Library is not infinite (if it really were, why this illusory duplication?); I prefer to dream that its polished surfaces represent and promise the infinite. (Borges 51)

This library offers no possibility of closure; it may or may not be finite, yet it hardly matters. The serpentine corridors filled with books cross and re-cross one another; dark stairways lead to yet other corridors both above and below. Within this library there is no Truth, as all texts are fiction. There are no final answers, as each book mirrors the architecture of the library itself, leading to yet more questions. There is no centre since, like the cosmos, the library seems to be in constant flux.

Like the temporal garden shared by the nursing mother and her infant, the post-historical library can be entered only through the gateway guarded by the angel of death. A medieval pilgrim writes (in a novel by Umberto Eco) of his visit to one such library, a labyrinth secluded at the heart of an ancient monastery whose architecture, in its complex rhythm, mirrors the "order of the universe, which the ancients called 'kosmos'" (Eco 22). The pilgrim relates his conversation with the ageing monks who guard the secret of this labyrinth--the last repository of the ancient knowledge which the world has forgotten.

> "Hunc mundum tipice labyrinthus denotat ille," the old man recited, absently. . . . The library is a great labyrinth, sign of the labyrinth of the world. You enter and you do not know whether you will come out. . . . "
>
> "So you don't know how one enters the library . . . ?"
>
> "Oh, yes." The old man laughed. Many know. You go by way of the ossarium. You can go through the ossarium, but you do not want to . . . The dead monks keep watch."

(Eco 181)[7]

Yet our tradition, in its fear of the dark, has misunderstood the role of these guardians. Unlike the Father, who would banish play from the corridors of his library,

> the guardian figures that stand at either side of the entrances to holy places . . . are there to keep out the "spoil sport," the advocates of Aristotelian logic, for whom A can never be B; for whom the actor is never to be lost in the part; for whom the mask, the image, the consecrated host, tree, or animal cannot become God, but only a reference. Such heavy thinkers are to remain without. (Campbell Primitive 25)

To those of us schooled in the linear tradition, with its careful exclusion of the play which is fundamental to the body's sense of time, the labyrinth is indeed a place of death. Our entry into the spiral dance is prevented as much by our fear of the ancient knowledge represented by body and earth as it is by our fascination with trivial substitutes. An encounter with the time of the body puts both our fear of death and the attraction of the Father's ultimately unsatisfying "tokens" into temporal perspective. This encounter with death leaves fear behind; within, the initiate enters a realm of endless play. All books are fictions, having no final, fixed meaning; but as stories about us, as an image of the recurring cycles of our lives, they become an essential part of the play of time. Within this ever-expanding library, there is room for the new stories which will arise as we rediscover the creative power of the lunar dance.

Many teachers, uncomfortable with the openness of dance and play, succumb to the temptation to impose their own images of order on their students. To a degree, such an imposition is inevitable, a part of our experience of learning to live as temporal beings in a community which expresses such images in a common language. Yet too often these images are presented to students as Ultimate Reality; the endless spiral of signifiers is lost from view as teachers insist on chaining their own temporal metaphors to an immovable rock.

My experience suggests that students who are offered such an inflexible model of temporal knowledge will eventually have an intense personal reaction to the discovery (which most reflective students make sooner of later) that there _is_ no unicorn, no centre, and that the books which have traditionally given meaning to our lives have now taken their place alongside a multitude of others on the shelves of a meandering labyrinth. Looking into the darkness of the ossarium which bars the path, these students begin to doubt the meaningfulness of their own existence, yet feel unable to return to the endless walk "down the well-beaten path to nothingwhere."

Yet once this threshold is crossed, the labyrinth offers a path toward temporal meaning as well. The spiral dance is a dance of time, of knowledge, of our place in the cycles of beginnings and endings.

> All that is made seems planless to the darkened mind, because there are more plans than it looked for . . . So with the Great Dance. . . . There seems no plan because it is all plan: there seems no centre because it is all centre. (Lewis Perelandra 218)

Chapter 4: Time and the Student

I. Introduction

> Curriculum is what students have an opportunity to learn. What students have an opportunity to learn depends . . . upon what they do *not* have an opportunity to learn. Power distributes opportunities and non-opportunities. (Cherryholmes 310)
>
> *We need a way of thinking/speaking that gives power no place to hide.* (Shapiro, in Cherryholmes 310; emphasis in original)

Education as we know it is dependent on an institutional structure which defines its relationship to knowledge in terms of a transcendental signified. The transcendental signified, it was noted in chapter two, plays a vital role in the institution in that it serves as a foundation, an impermeable barrier beyond which our questioning becomes meaningless. Thus, within the confines of the institution, the rules of the game are fixed; parents, teachers, and students know what to expect of one another, and speak a common cultural language which allows the drama of linear education to proceed unhindered. Yet, as Cherryholmes notes,

> The succession of ideas put forward since the Second World War to serve as transcendental signifieds in curriculum attests to two things: there has been a continuing search for a centre to fix and ground thinking and arguments about curriculum, and none has been found. (304)

Or, as Cherryholmes states elsewhere, the idea of a transcendental signified is a *fiction* (302). In a tradition which has defined Truth in terms of certainty and solidity, and which has equated fiction and myth with Falsehood, these two observations are essentially identical. What this implies for the day to day life of students and educators is that, though we may go about our routines as if we still inhabited an orderly Newtonian cosmos, a black hole has been discovered at the centre of our once-tidy universe which threatens to engulf the edifices--cathedrals and malls alike --which celebrate our victory over time and death.

Yet modern Man has failed to recognize, as his tradition ensured he would, that a fiction is by no means a meaningless void. On the contrary, only by recognizing the power of fiction, and by restoring to our students a measure of control over their own fictions, can we come once again to an understanding of the meaning of living-in-time. Chapter three suggests that the body has an *inherent* understanding of the world which is not dependent on the artificial structuring of linear time; the power of the body's sense of time--which lies, concealed by layer upon layer of intellectual debris, at the heart of our cultural tradition--must be felt, lived, experienced. Our original participation in the wholeness of the body's sense of time is, in Berman's words, "the ground of our being" (166). As the mystery of this original participation is brought back into the curriculum, it offers a balance for the one-sided intellectuality of the linear tradition which, in its heroic efforts to replace the "fiction" of our original and final nothingness with its own "history" (the saga of the victory of the sons of light over the daughters of darkness), has lost contact with this original ground as well.[1]

As the ground of our being, as the matrix which generated the symbols which offer a key to the meaning of the mysteries of life and death, the time of the body takes us back to the intrinsic power of the origin which archaic traditions have consistently recognized but which we seem to have forgotten. Unlike the linear tradition, which has understood power as the control which Self exerts over Other, the body's sense of power lies in an awareness of its own finitude, an admission that the well-being of Self is inextricably enmeshed in that of the Other.

Our mythological tradition testifies to the effort which has been devoted to the repression of the maternal darkness from which we emerged and to which we return; yet this repressed power still lies patiently waiting, a dark serpent coiled at the heart of the resplendent cathedral, ready to manifest her power to save and heal or, if we so choose, to bring our tidy cosmos down in ruins.

The Power of Darkness

The continuing power of this ground was brought forcefully to my consciousness (just a week ago at the time of this writing) as I joined in the ancient rite of the American Indian sweatlodge.[2] Like those who enter the labyrinth which Dinnerstein describes (cited in the opening pages of chapter three), the price of entry was that we "leave all we brought with us"; a watch, a coin, a key, would sear the flesh of any who foolishly refused to leave such attachments outside. After the ritual Cree prayers to the four directions, we entered the darkness of the small circular structure which became for each of us "an abyss, a cavern stretching farther than we could see." In the almost unbearable heat of this black cosmos, "space seemed to close in on us. . . . This darkness led to more darkness, until darkness leading to darkness was all we knew. . . . Nothingness [spread] around us" (Dinnerstein Woman 159-60).

The sweatlodge was, for me, a place of fear, a reminder of my own attachment to the world of time and light. Yet this darkness was a place of knowledge and healing as well, as we began to glimpse, in the intense heat and absolute blackness, that which "we did not know existed . . . but saw as children, our whole lives drawn here, image over image, past time, beyond space" (160).

This knowledge, which is nurtured in the immense blackness where the hopeful rays of solar time can never penetrate, points us back to the Garden which still shelters the ancient World Tree, to an Origin where the artificiality of linear time becomes meaningless. As chapter three shows, the path leading back to this tree passes through the light as well as the darkness, and as we taste once again of its fruit, the polarities which divide our world begin to melt away. Self and other, feminine and masculine, sun and shadow, take their rightful place as aspects of the larger whole.

Though many educators will glimpse the positive potential inherent in such an understanding of time and knowledge, those of us who have made a significant investment in the linear edifice will, because of the fundamentality of the traditional concepts which this understanding seems to endanger, recognize that such a revision threatens us with loss as well. In a tradition grounded on a conception of time as conflict, it is understandable that any movement beyond the fundamental dichotomies in which this conflict is rooted will be seen by some as a potentially disastrous abandonment of the solid ground on which our institutions have stood for centuries.

Yet whether we will it or not, these traditional mythologies have begun to come unraveled, and their demise leaves students alone, exposed, and empty. As Joseph Campbell writes,

> just as the buffalo suddenly disappeared from the North American plains, leaving the Indians deprived not only of a central mythic symbol but also of the very manner of life that the symbol once had served, so likewise in our own beautiful world, not only have our public religious symbols lost their claim to authority and passed away, but the ways of life they once supported have also disappeared . . . (Myths 91)

We have seen what has happened . . . to primitive

> communities unsettled by the white man's civilization. With their old taboos discredited, they immediately go to pieces, disintegrate, and become resorts of vice and disease. Today the same thing is happening to us. (*Myths* 9)

Thus chapter three points the way toward the rediscovery of the lost origins of our own mythological foundation, and suggests in particular the importance of the neglected darkness as a source of creative power. The labyrinth is a symbol of return, of death, and of ultimate rebirth, and as the student begins to express her experience of the *whole* of life the true import of the foundation begins to emerge. As Leonard suggests, the meaning of our encounter with the darkness is best expressed through "poetry," the individual mythmaking which becomes a shared experience as it is evoked in the imagery of song, dance, painting.

> The poet is the one who dares to say death, and to say it in song. . . . To sing this song requires daring, requires venturing into the region of death and giving up the secure hold on part of existence with which one is comfortable so one can affirm the whole. (Leonard 141)

> Poetry is the establishing of being by means of the word . . . when the gods are named originally and the essence of things receives a name, so that things for the first time shine out, human existence is brought into a firm relation and given a basis. The speech of the poet is establishment not only in the sense of the free act of giving, but at the same time in the sense of the firm

basing of human existence on its foundation. (Heidegger Existence 281-2)

As the student begins to recognize the power of her original participation in the time of the body, of her all-but-forgotten identification with the ancient rhythms of the earth, she finds in these deeply-rooted memories a foundation for the creation of a story which will lend meaning and direction to her voyage through the labyrinth of time. This foundation is one which has room for the traditional Western story of the meaning of time, provided that the linear Book is willing to abandon its suffocating claims to exclusivity and, in a recognition of the positive value of its new status as a fiction, take its place in the labyrinthine library of the post-historical curriculum. This foundation, because of its inability to sustain the claims to universality to which those of us educated in the Western tradition have become accustomed, will no doubt appear at first glance to be as insubstantial as the primordial ooze from which we once emerged; barely able to support the weight of an individual traveler, let alone the massive bulwarks of our ancient institutions. For this reason, as I move into a description of a particular institutional setting, an assessment of its potential as well as a critique of its shortcomings, I do so with a measure of patience and understanding. Such institutions are indeed, I believe, sincerely committed to the well-being of students, and have dedicated themselves to the task of contributing

> meaning and nobility to their unadventured lives, from birth to marriage and its duties and, with the gradual failure of powers, a peaceful passage of the last gate. (Campbell Creative 37)

However, to paraphrase Joseph Campbell,

> by those to whom such living would be not life, but anticipated death, the mountains that to others appear to be of stone are recognized as of the mist of dream, and precisely between their God and Devil, heaven and hell, white and black, the [student] of heart walks through. Out beyond those walls, in the uncharted forest night, where the terrible wind of God blows directly on the questing undefended soul, tangled ways may lead to madness. They may also lead, however, . . . to "all those things that go to make heaven and earth." (Creative 37)

Learning the Meaning of Time

Recent research into learning disabilities has shown the importance of a structured temporal environment in the preschool years. Children raised in the temporal "chaos" of the impoverished inner city, this work suggests, fail to learn the "language" of the linear classroom.

> Reviewing thousands of hours of tapes, Norton [the researcher] found that references to time were rare. Most parents hardly ever provided instructions like "Finish lunch so you can see your favorite TV program at 1:30," or even sequential statements like "First put on

> your socks, then your shoes." Daily routines, such as Daddy or Mommy leaving for work and regular times for bed and meals, are usually nonexistent in these cramped, dangerous quarters . . .
>
> Children from these homes may be able to read a clock, but that does not mean that they understand time. (Elizabeth Taylor 56)

Not surprisingly, these children feel like aliens in the arbitrarily structured environment of the classroom:

> "The structured situation makes them feel powerless [states another researcher]. It feels arbitrary, senseless and imposed because at home there is no predictability and rigidity." Confused youngsters may withdraw or rebel, prompting some teachers to peg these children as troublemakers or slow learners. (56)

The temporal structuring of students' lives which occurs each day in the linear classroom may seem to be a petty imposition having little bearing on the major task of the educator. This research, however, suggests its _fundamentality_: if students are to accept unquestioningly the world view which ensures the survival of our institutions, they must, from earliest childhood, have this temporal grid inscribed upon their bodies.

The key to understanding the _macrocosm_, the picture which students take with them of the cosmos and of their place in it, thus seems to lie in the _mesocosm_, the mundane round of scheduled activities which take place from day to day in the classroom, in the home, even in the hospital where, as chapter three suggests, the inscription of time upon the body generally begins. (Once again, a comparison with the birth of the cosmos might be in order, where the nearer we come to the original Big Bang, the more important the seconds, microseconds, even nano- and pico-seconds, become.) For this reason, my consideration of the milieu in which the students whose insights will form an important part of this chapter spend much of their day will necessarily be somewhat incomplete. This milieu is, indeed, in many ways quite highly structured (as the description which follows will show); yet the ability of a student to question this structuring, the uniqueness of her response to this mesocosm which brought her to my attention, suggests in turn an anomaly in her first encounter with the meaning of time. Adoption, separation from a parent, early years spent in an alinear environment (the inner city or the third world); experiences such as these can no doubt "interfere" with the child's assimilation into the temporal mainstream or, stated more positively, instill in the mind of the child a measure of doubt which enables her to question the inevitability of the present linear order. Such experiences are indeed significant, and contribute to our understanding of the student's unique gift, but can only be hinted at in this study.

The "disadvantaged" students which were the focus of Norton's research seem to offer no real threat to the institution: as long as they remain relatively few in number, they can be relegated to a sort of psychological ghetto, their anomalous performance accounted for by suggestions that they are economically disadvantaged, of lower IQ, of "different" racial or cultural background ("inferior," if perhaps no longer explicit, remaining clearly implicit). Even as, in some school districts, their numbers seem to grow and they become a financial burden, they remain personally disempowered and thus continue to accept linear reality and its pseudomaterial rewards as the norm.

Similarly, the few students whose "aberrant" sense of time has contributed to the development of the themes in this chapter will not of themselves undermine the foundations of the institution. Yet, while teachers and counselors may work with them, seek to redirect them, and ultimately abandon them to their folly, it may be that their voices will speak to us, from their own encounter with the darkness, of a new sense of time where both light and dark balance our educational praxis, of a means of once again engaging the interest of the larger number of students whose "sullenness and withdrawal" (noted in chapter two) speak eloquently of the failure of our mythological tradition.

II. Description of a Setting: A Common Mythological Heritage

As I was working on revisions to the first chapter of this study, one of my advisors pointed out the need to clarify the unusual characteristics of the setting in which I live and work. While, as I suggested in chapter two, the school system in which I was educated and continue to teach is in many respects unique, it is easier for me, in my daily contact with students, to see commonalities. As LDR schools have grown in size and number, so too has their desire to enter into the social mainstream. An educational system which once sought to isolate students from the influences of the "world" now places greater priority on helping them find their place within secular society. The religious discourse which once pervaded every aspect of school life is now largely confined to the Bible classroom, and even there its original stridency has been softened. Asked to characterize the religious instruction in the LDR elementary school which my own children have attended over the past nine years, the word which first comes to mind is indifference. Unlike my own education at PJA, where religion seemed to become (particularly during the crucial fourth-grade year) the focus of my life, traditional myths which emphasize the shortness of time and the crucial role of each student in the drama of history seem to have fallen into a period of neglect. Day after day, when I asked my children what they had done in Bible class that day, the answer was "workbook." Rather than accepting the challenge of dealing creatively with the traditional mythological foundation, many teachers are understandably driven onto safer ground, hoping that students will somehow work through the treacherous search for meaning on their own, or with the help of parents and peers. Several explanations for this apparent neglect have occurred to me, and a brief exploration of this question seems to be in order here because of its bearing on the central themes of this study.

While I grew up in Southern California, my children have lived in Central Alberta for the past nine years. Because traditional LDR eschatology[3] places the United States at the focus of Bible prophecy, it is possible that these myths seem less relevant in a Canadian setting. While even to many Americans the historical drama which portrays the United States as the "lamb-like beast" of Revelation 13 has begun to seem as quaintly anachronistic as the yellowing prophetic charts once used by itinerant evangelists, it has perhaps always been easier for Canadians and Europeans to recognize the element of narcissism inherent in the American view of history.

More importantly, perhaps, the late fifties and early sixties seem, in retrospect, to have been a time of spiritual and political crisis. Traditional LDR exegesis of the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation points to 1844 as a pivotal date, the year when early believers mistakenly expected Christ to return to judge the earth (the "cleansing of the sanctuary" spoken of in Daniel 8:14). Because Christ had apparently not returned, it was decided that the date was correct but that the event foretold was spiritual: the beginning of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the opening of the books of judgement, a thorough examination of the deeds and thoughts of each individual, beginning with Adam. Thus, during the years I attended elementary school, it was not uncommon to hear teachers and classmates refer to Christ's prophecy that "as in the days of Noah . . . " (Matt. 24:37). Just as the destruction of the earth had been delayed (in the LDR reading of the story) for 120 years while Noah preached his message of repentance, so we had been given 120 years to warn the world of the imminence of the end. Thus 1964 became (unofficially, of course) a popular focal point, and to many church members, world events (the Communist menace, the election of our first Catholic president, decaying moral values) seemed to confirm the nearness of the end.

Many LDR educators who are now middle-aged have uncomfortable memories of teachers like Mrs. L., who, in 1957, was able to state with confidence that the second coming was at most seven years off. Seven years!--both impossibly far away (for a fourth-grader) and frighteningly near, since each day brought with it the possibility that (as Mrs. L. emphasized in morning worships) my "probation" would close, that the heavenly bookkeeping had at last caught up to the records of the living and that my case would be judged, my file forever closed. The devastating psychological effects of this myth of impending judgement--with its daily threat of eternal doom--were explored in chapter two.

It is clear to me that this official picture of time is not emphasized in LDR schools and churches as it once was. "Philip, when did you study the mark of the beast?" I recently asked my thirteen-year old. Neither he nor his older brother could remember ever having studied this once-crucial element of LDR eschatology (drawn from Revelation 13, and pointing to the decisive role of the United States in precipitating the final world crisis). Similarly, sermons and official church publications have (in spite of a rather militant right wing which continues to defend traditional emphases) taken on a more broadly Christian tone, emphasizing the "good news" along with other, more clearly positive (though, foucauldian cynics might argue, no less ideologically motivated) aspects of the LDR message: the seventh-day Sabbath, healthful living, and "stewardship" (members' financial responsibility toward the church).

It would appear that these shifts (which have been accompanied by an on-going discussion of issues such as the nature of inspiration, the implications of modern geology and physics for traditional views of God, and the role and organization of the church) offer both educators and students opportunities to explore the meaning of their mythological heritage which were unthinkable a generation ago. Yet I would suggest that few of today's educators and students are able to profit from these opportunities. While to a degree old barriers have begun to crumble, while there is indeed a greater sense of openness and tolerance on many LDR campuses, the lines remain clearly drawn on an official level and serve to fix the limits of meaningful discussion (particularly in the elementary school, where teachers are subjected to the daily scrutiny of parents and administrators). Though the most strident aspects of traditional temporal paradigms (with their insistence on the shortness and anthropocentrism of historical time) are perhaps less often emphasized, their presence is nonetheless inescapable, and continues to colour every aspect of the student-teacher interaction. Thus it seems unlikely that this apparent opportunity for mythological renewal will be fully appreciated: students who are unable to find a sense of spiritual identity and rootedness in traditional paradigms and metaphors--and who feel within themselves a lack which popular culture has been unable to fill--will, in most cases, be compelled to seek meaningful alternatives on their own.

Certainly, LDR education continues to offer the advantages which result from relatively small classes and a shared cultural heritage (most students come from LDR homes, and a familiarity with this common background provides a basis for discussion of religious issues which is generally absent from the public school). Yet, with the tacit admission that the mythological landmarks are no longer vital, with the gradual retreat to the safer ground of untroubled indifference, LDR education is (as its critics--liberal and conservative alike--have pointed out) in some respects indistinguishable from that offered by public schools; thus, as in public schools, though the soul of this mythological tradition may be in decline (as chapter two suggests), its body lives on, and continues to form the foundation of the curriculum. Indeed, because these myths are still assumed to be historically factual, it does so more explicitly than in our secular institutions.

Learning and the Body

This discussion has, it is hoped, provided the reader with a better understanding of the traditions which contribute to the world-view of those students whose insights have enriched my understanding of the meaning of time. Yet a visitor to the campus who engages students in a candid discussion of their school experience, as I have on several occasions, is not likely to hear them speak of the church's historical mission nor of the current climate of eschatological indifference. Rather, the conversation will almost certainly turn--sooner or later--to the question of school standards of dress and deportment. While "village" students (those who live off the central campus, usually with relatives) are allowed a fairly large measure of freedom, approximately one-half of the student body lives in the more regulated atmosphere of the residence halls.

For many students the dormitory offers an experience of new-found freedom from an oppressive home environment, a community of peers where lifetime friendships are formed. Yet, in addition to the temporal structuring of the classroom, the dormitory imposes a new regime of evening worships, study periods, room checks, and required attendance at weekend services in the church. Even more disturbing to many students are the standards relating to personal appearance and social behavior. Not only are these standards felt by some students to be somewhat arbitrary and fundamentally unrelated to their spiritual experience, they also have the disadvantage of being almost impossible to enforce equitably, their weight falling disproportionately on dormitory students, and in particular on female residents (whose dress and behavior is unquestionably more closely regulated than that of the males).

While it is tempting to dismiss the policing of the student's body--skirt length, make-up, jewelry, attendance at worships and classes--as a peripheral issue, it has become clear to me that this would constitute a superficial reading of the curricular text. Though traditional myths may seem to be of relatively little importance to many students, studies such as that of Norton (cited earlier in this chapter) suggest that it is *here*, where the myth impacts most clearly on students' lives, that real learning takes place. As the metaphorical Father reaches out and touches the student's physical space and time, requiring that she enact a prescribed temporal routine and that her physical appearance conform to established norms, the fundamental lessons of school-time are inscribed upon her body. While it could indeed be argued (as suggested in chapter two) that the greater liberty of village or public school students to choose the manner in which they wish to present themselves is to some extent illusory (largely determined by anonymous commercial interests, for example), the constant enforcement of such regulations inevitably creates feelings of resentment between students and staff, and suggests (incorrectly, many students would no doubt argue) that there is a relationship between adherence to ephemeral social norms and one's personal religious experience. Moreover, many sensitive students approach personal adornment as a fundamentally artistic activity, and deeply resent the violation of their freedom of self-expression which such restrictions impose.

The lessons which are taught in this way include many of the traditional myths explored in chapter two: the body, and in particular the female body, is, like the untamed landscape, to be subdued, brought into subjection to the mind (with the male mind tacitly understood to be normative). These lessons are mirrored in the order and decorum of church services, the subdued sparseness of the sanctuary itself, and in the unmistakable sexual hierarchization of the service. The continuing exclusion of women from the ordained ministry (and thus from the church hierarchy) is but one manifestation of what is arguably (as shown in chapter three) a deep-seated fear of the ancient wisdom of the body, reflected in turn in an insistence on a closed model of knowledge: official readings of the authoritative text (supplied unstintingly by the hierarchy) are assumed to offer the final answers to all essential questions, and discussion (both in the church and in the classroom) is generally limited to the practical application of these answers to daily life.

In spite of the negative tone of the above discussion, I would emphasize that my criticism is not unlike comments which I might make about my own parents, to whom I continue to feel indebted in spite of the defects which, because of my closeness to them, I am able to see all the more clearly.

Indeed, as I re-read this passage one year after it was originally conceived, it now appears rather unfair in a few respects. As my involvement with students and staff has increased over the past year--and in particular as I have watched my own son complete his first year at the academy (tenth grade)--I have become more aware of the open-mindedness and eagerness to work for change on the part of the principal and many teachers. There is, I believe, a growing willingness on the part of LDR educators and administrators to recognize that many of the issues which have, in the past, created friction between staff and students, are cultural rather than moral; to respect the student's taste and judgment in matters of dress and decorum; and to allow women a greater role in the hierarchy of the church.[4]

In summary, I would suggest that the major differences between this school (the LDR high school which I will refer to, as I did in chapter two, as "WRA") and the public schools in Edmonton where I have visited classrooms on many occasions may be attributed to a stronger sense of community which arises from: 1) the fact that many students travel from distances of hundreds of miles to live on the campus; and 2) the assumption that students share a common mythological heritage. While the intimacy of this community can lead to tensions and dissatisfactions, it also creates a sense of belonging which induces many students to return year after year, in spite of the burden imposed by the expenses of tuition, meals, and lodging (which can total over $7000 per year for a high school student living in the dormitory).

III. Biographical Studies:[5]

Running Wild as the Wolves of the Night

> --Great God! I'd rather be
> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.
> (Wordsworth 69)

This morning (August 31, the first day of the 1989-90 college semester) I spoke at length with Meagan, the student whose work I had intended to make a major focus of this chapter. She graduated from high school last year and has returned, intending to major in English/Secondary Education. Each time I speak with her I feel a bit puzzled at the turn her thoughts seem to have taken since we last met, and today was no exception.

My acquaintance with Meagan began in February of 1987, when she was in tenth grade. Because high school art is usually offered only first semester, she requested permission to take Art 10 under the "special projects" rubric, and over the next few months she completed assigned projects on her own time, meeting with me once or twice a week to discuss her work. Though she seemed creative, intelligent, and highly motivated, her unique gifts emerged more clearly the following school year. As she began to do more independent work in art 20 the next fall, I asked her, after she had completed a few introductory assignments, to bring in a sketchbook in which she had been drawing and writing poetry during the summer.

I was impressed in particular with the strange figures which emerged, Guston-like, from the pages of this note book (costume designs, as I learned later), and encouraged her to further explore some of these themes in her painting. Gradually, a baroque world peopled by priestesses and druids --reminiscent of the pre-Christian "Avalon" of Marion Zimmer Bradley's fiction--began to emerge, of which this brief written assignment (completed near the beginning of the semester) will serve as an example.

Students were asked to imagine and describe in detail a self portrait, a painting in which they appear personally in some way (though actual execution of the picture was not required). As Meagan described her painting:

> The night is dark and sultry. Mists hang over the scene like a shroud. The forest of silhouettes is closing in on the small clearing. Eerie firelight illuminates the centre of the scene and the first line or layer of trees behind the circle of fires. I lie upon the altar in a billowing cloak of grey/green satin. At the head of the coffin-shaped altar stands the druid with arms raised,

> knife poised over my heart. The druid's face is half hidden by the hood of his black cloak. He bares his teeth in a wicked, death's head grin. I myself appear calm and tranquil among all this evil. The two moons, one red small one, overlapping the larger purple one, hang high in the sky. The ceremonial dagger poised over my heart is red with rust, its blade is long and wickedly curved, the hilt being an upside-down crucifix. I am wearing a crucifix on a chain and it matches the one on the dagger hilt like a mirrored image. A white glow surrounds my body and a yellow (sickly) one surrounds the druid. The view is slightly aerial looking up to the front of the altar. I am looking straight at the viewer, the druid has his head inclined downward. The ground is charred around the clearing. (Fall 1987)

Most obvious in this brief descriptive essay is Meagan's romantic vision of the past. Such a return to a pre-technological age of superstition and magic is not at all uncommon in the fantasies of high school students (inspired, no doubt, to some degree by the popularity of writers such as M. Z. Bradley and J. R. R. Tolkien). Yet while there is an element of escapism in her writing and art work (as Meagan herself recognizes), the tumultuous religious and sexual imagery of this paragraph makes it clear as well that the writer is struggling with her self-identity; seeking to situate herself in a world which she finds empty, mechanical, disenchanted; trying to make sense of her "memories" of the magic and power of time in a world where it has become a commodity measured by clocks and time-cards. Like Wordsworth, Meagan dimly glimpses a lost Avalon where human beings were a part of the cycles of nature, whose god, rather than an ancient patriarch safely relegated to his distant throne, was inseparable from the temporal rhythms of the world. As she writes in a poem composed near the beginning of the following semester:

> Let me run wild as the wolves in the night,
> Play haunting songs by the pale moonlight.
>
> Let me bathe in the soft caress of sleep,
> let me hide in the hollow warm, dark, and deep.
>
> Let him come to me, my dark elvin dream,
> to take me in his arms, time stop or so seem.
>
> (March 1988)[6]

The False Mirror

The Meagan of these months--as her poetry and journals show--felt keenly her estrangement from traditional myths (which she nonetheless continued to accept at face value). Deprived of the support of a community of belief (there seemed at times to be an unbridgeable gulf between her vision of an ideal world and the reality which she forced her self to face each day), Meagan seemed to be struggling, in particular through her drawing and poetry, to thread her own way through the serpentine meanders of a dark labyrinth. Unprepared by her education to live in a world of uncertainty and ambivalence, her personal survival at times seemed to be in doubt. Though she maintained a perfunctory compliance with the requirements of the temporal routine of school and work, the intensity of her struggle emerges clearly from the notes kept during that winter and spring.

As she describes her experience of those months (in a journal kept as a course requirement in her Religious Studies class), she moved from brief peaks of brilliance and clarity to lengthy troughs of darkness and despair.[7]

> Feb. 2/88 [first entry]. I feel like a television set when I think about myself as a whole. I am changeable to the extreme. Let's say this particular T.V. has cable connections. I have so many moods and reactions in one day I feel like there are at least 4 people using my mind. I actually like being changeable, but sometimes it becomes too stressful. Maybe I should try and disconnect this cable line of personalities for it is becoming too expensive. My nerves can't afford it forever I'm sure. You know you should have asked us to compare ourselves to animals or at least give us the option. Furniture and food stifle my creativity. Now if I could have used a chameleon the possibilities could have been limitless.
>
> Feb. 11. I feel empty, wistful, bitter, frustrated, in despair, vacant, crestfallen (do you have the picture yet?).
>
> Feb. 17. I feel good today. I feel energetic, undaunted. This is one of my power trips. I am on top of everything again.

Feb. 18. I feel hollow, mechanical, emotionless. . . .

April 7. I don't care about anything. I feel cold, empty, flat, dark, quiet. I feel like an echo: hollow, lonely, mournful.

April 11. I feel nothingness, numbness.

May 3. I was thinking during biology that all these people know where they are headed in life, they have goals set according to their purpose in life. I think that as soon as I find a purpose to fulfill, my great life decisions will fall into place. So now all I have to do is find a purpose.

(Teacher response penciled below:) I think you are going to have a hard time doing that.

May 4. Yes, especially when there doesn't seem like there are any out there. There has to be something though, otherwise why would any of us be here? I want to believe there is one, I'm tired of bitterness.

May 16. I feel so empty and alone. I feel grey, cold, and numb, like I'm in slow motion. I'm falling and I'm paralyzed. I must be in the eye of a hurricane where it is dead calm and I can't move because all around there is havoc and confusion; even though there is a fairly wide radius of nothingness I know that the awful power is there.

May 24. I had a great weekend. I wanted to stay home for good.

June 7. I am so tired but other than that I love

> today. . . . I just love this weather. . . . I feel like bareback riding in a greenfield on the edge of a forest when it's like this, with fog rolling in and a light drizzle coming down to fall on my face. It makes me feel at peace. All I want to do today is sit outside and breathe.

Throughout this unsettled semester, her journal shows that Meagan was struggling with images of herself and of God (which are, as she points out in a letter quoted below, closely interconnected), attempting to reconcile traditional "solar" images--the "false mirror" motif which appears repeatedly in her poetry--with the more ambivalent "lunar" model which is truer to her experience of the world. It gradually becomes clear that she is rejecting a tradition which equates God with light, and "not-God" with darkness and evil; a tradition which posits a masculine deity "out there," radically distinct from, and even set in opposition to, the world of nature (which, unlike the experience of a student who grows up, as I did, in the suburbs of a large city, is so much a part of the lives of rural Canadian students). Not surprisingly, Meagan feels isolated and alienated in a world which rejects the power of the non-rational and non-linear.

> Mar. 18. It is so cruel, painfully cruel. I don't want God for a friend, yet he is the only one who can give me what I want. I could never love him and he wants that. . . .
>
> Mar. 21. I see God as all-powerful, but who allows the terrible other side to have a power trip and use us on

earth as a toy to be broken. . . . If you don't love him you had better like arid climates. Well what about those who don't love him and who don't want to go to hell either, what do we do? Why couldn't there be some hope for those thrown here in the middle? Since we don't step out or move toward him we get dragged back into evil. We are classified with those who have deliberately chosen against him. He makes the choice for us.

Her personal struggle with inner light and darkness is even more clearly evident in a poem written that spring:

> Mirror deep and reflection blue,
> are you me or am I you?
>
> . . .
>
> We are the same yet not at all.
> As one rises, the other does fall.
>
> One the white, the pure, the child,
> one the black, the strong, the wild.
>
> . . .
>
> On whom be the call, heaven or hell,
> a repentant prayer or a chanting spell?
>
> Each its price and each its reward,
> all to do is to choose which lord.
>
> All I must do is suppress the fear,
> Summon the courage and break the mirror.[8]

The attentive reader will note the Lacanian imagery of this poem, the striking parallel with the "mirror phase" (referred to in chapter three) where the child learns the "language" through which to express her desire, and during which a temporal grid is inscribed upon her body. As a result of this process, as Meagan's poem suggests, she has learned to see herself through the eyes of the metaphorical Father who stands behind the curriculum, urging upon her his own attractive--yet ultimately unsatisfactory--substitutes for her desires which are rooted--as she, unlike many other students, is still able to recognize--in her memory of original time (Silverman 135,145). (The "dark elvin dream" in the poem quoted earlier seems to be a similar reference to the self which the artificial illumination of the "false mirror" has banished.)

In another poem, she seems to be seeking a more positive image of God, one truer to her own experience: the lunar queen, whose powerful hands weave the fabric of temporal meaning.

> Our dream child, our silver-footed Queen,
> alone she walked, through the night serene.
> Swathed in a cloak of sable lustre,
> all could reach but none could quite touch her.
>
> . . .
>
> Leave her be, let the silver lady
> breathe in the essence of life force sweet.
> Save, protect her, the last of her kind,

she who weaves the tapestries of time.

If you dare kill her, our soul shall be bent,
the tapestry she weaves be twisted and rent.
Then where be we as evil runs wild,
how shall we stand without our dream child?

She how she lies, so close to cold death,
see how shallow and painful her breath.
Don't let her die, don't hasten her end,
for in this, the world to darkness descends.[9]

A similar sentiment is voiced in a panentheistic hymn to the lunar goddess written some months earlier.

Your ivory face amongst ebony clouds,
a pearly figure, obscured in a shroud.
. . .
The object of many a mystical lore,
you flaunt and tease, enchantress to core.
I'll unlock your secrets, they're not so entwined,
that never the right key, ever will I find.[10]
(1987)

Heaven or Hell?

In retrospect, a letter which she wrote the following October (in response to an inquiry I had made a few weeks earlier) reads like an insightful commentary on the confusion of the winter and spring:

> Your first general question pertained to a negative perception of God as well as a negative self-image. To

> me, the two are closely related or at least were. Once I cleared up one problem the other partially resolved itself also. . .
>
> Being dependent on God and surrendering your life to God are key factors in the Christian experience and I can't do either. . . . I have a dark side as well as a "good" side, they are both a part of me and I want to keep them both, not cut one half of me off. I wouldn't be a complete person then. (Letter, October 1988)

Meagan senses the meaninglessness of a curriculum where the mechanical regimentation of the student's personal time mirrors the arid systematization of knowledge. Learning, Meagan suggests, has become a mechanical manipulation of sterile "facts," stripped of the creative power for which she longs to find an outlet.

> April 11. . . . If you major in history (say if you were going to be a historian) do you study only the history they make you learn or do you have a choice of which age you wish to study? I don't want to study modern history for example but I would love to study medieval history exclusively and possibly teach college classes on it.
>
> April 12. . . . I hate modernism and advancement. All people do in this world centers on the intellectual and technological. Everyone is so busy thinking they don't feel. Logic prevails over instinct, there are no codes of honour etc. anymore. Nothing is real and this reality

> is worth nothing. I don't want anything to do with it.

Or, as she writes in a poem composed at about the same time:

> Am I alone or just one of the few,
> to harbor memories long lost,
> to melt the cold passionless frost?
>
> One spark dying in a realistic world,
> guarded embers too far apart,
> to unite and restart the heart.[11]

Not surprisingly, Meagan's views on the meaning of knowledge did not contribute to her scholastic success, and earned her a number of bewildered comments from her Religion teacher (though on occasion his remarks are quite sympathetic and understanding as well).

> March 24. (Teacher:) You seem to have a very opinionated view of God, yet it is not based on anything (as I see it) that can be considered to be factual--more like it's an image that has been created. . . .
>
> You're so angry at something that you can't see--God--yet you hate Him for something He isn't. You're not happy, yet you're not prepared to do anything about it. You just go blindly, flailing in the dark, lashing out at things you do not see. There is a better, happier way to live a life.

The teacher, in suggesting that her view is a fiction, implies in turn that he can offer her a better, factual image of God.[12] Yet, given that she is writing from the standpoint of someone who feels herself to be on the outside, it is difficult to point to anything "heretical" in her view of a vengeful, jealous God; her reading is rather strongly grounded in the Old Testament and the Apocalypse, perhaps, but so too is the LDR tradition (though it has now become, as a result of the shift toward the "good news" approach mentioned earlier in this chapter, more common to emphasize "natural consequences" rather than divine wrath when speaking of final retribution, the outcome for the "sinner" being, of course, much the same).

Meagan seems, in fact, to be affirming the factuality of traditional mythology rather strongly, to have taken it very seriously indeed (unlike many of her classmates who are able to shrug it off indifferently). She lives in and is strongly aware of the _grey_ areas of life, yet sees that in a world of blacks and whites her "greyness" is as dark as the abyss which the Father's mirror has shown her within. She is going to hell, as she put it rather bluntly in a conversation a few months later; though not particularly happy about it, she seemed to have resigned herself to the inevitable price of the path she had chosen, apparently concurring with Joseph Campbell, as he writes:

> But better Hell in one's own character that Heaven as someone else; for that would be exactly to make of Hell, Heaven and of Heaven, Hell. (_Creative_ 85-6)

The Kiss of Apollo

Beneath her struggle to find herself in the present lies the constant threat that if she persists in her "childish" rebellion, if she refuses to accept the "normal" view of herself and the world, she will be coerced into submission.

> Feb. 9. I feel vacant, like I'm not really here. I feel like I'm just being mechanical, I don't feel anything. I feel like I'm in a mirror watching myself do the things I have to do, not really participating with my mind. . . . I'm feeling sorry for myself, though I hate to admit it.
>
> (Teacher:) What is wrong with feeling sorry for yourself? . . .
>
> Feb. 10. Feeling sorry for yourself is weak . . . It's also wrong according to God. You're supposed to rejoice in all things, even the bad. This is so hard for me, because pessimism dominates me.
>
> (Teacher:) What makes you feel that feeling sorry for yourself at times is wrong? Where does God say it is wrong?
>
> Feb. 11. I don't know where "exactly" to quote from but I've always been told it's terrible and self-centered and promotes and produces dissatisfaction; all it is is negative. . . . At home they think that means I'm selfish, self-centered, lazy, and psychologically unhealthy, so whenever I get too depressed there hovers a threat of mental therapy and I abhor that.

Particularly in her poetry, it becomes clear that Meagan recognizes and values the gifts which set her apart from others, in spite of the pain which they have brought her as well, and senses that, though for the time being she has little choice but to comply outwardly with the demands made of her by the linear world of classes and work, she must not allow it to capture and bind her. The coercive threat of "therapy" which she fears is not unlike her image of the educational process. As she writes in a poem (dated March, 1988) which is no doubt an expression of these fears:

They captured her and tortured her,
for she followed not their way.
She was harmless but they hated her,
as the night despised by day.

"Teach her, mold her," this they cried,
"Make her such as are we."
And so, they tried to bind her mind
as her body to that tree.[13]

Like Cassandra, Meagan seems to have been given a gift which, in a world blind to all that lies outside the glare of its artificial suns, has proven to be a curse as well. Unable, like Cassandra, to love the solar Father, he (Apollo, in the Greek myth)--in a spiteful gesture of farewell--has spit into her mouth; though she recognizes the sickness and artificiality of the world in which she lives and speaks her vision of this truth, it is she who has been defined as sick and out of touch with reality.[14]

Learning to Live with Darkness

By October of 1988 Meagan had successfully finished the semester at WRA and was living with her father (who was separated from her mother)[15] in Calgary, where she had enrolled in a public high school and was preparing to complete her senior year. In response to a letter I had sent her a few weeks earlier, she wrote to say that she was making progress toward resolution of her religious crisis, and that the once-dreaded visit to a therapist had, at the urging of her father (with whom she has a very good relationship), indeed taken place, and had helped her come to terms with her self-image as well:

> Part of my problem stemmed from a depressive illness which is being corrected through therapy and anti-depressants.
>
> . . . I don't have so much of the depression because of the therapy and pills. I have noticed that since I am not constantly in despair I don't have my gift to its maximum. I think that the more you hurt the more sensitive you are to feelings and certain planes of understanding.

In addition to the surprisingly mature-sounding passages where she seems to have settled many of her questions relating to her personal identity (quoted above, "Letter, October 1988") she has also made a rather dramatic decision regarding her relationship with the church:

> . . . I have now rejected God and the church and have no plans of returning. I now find I have a much more positive feeling about myself, at least character-wise,

> since I have stopped striving for Christian excellence.
>
> . . . I think that a substantial portion of my problem with self-acceptance came from my failure to live up to the Christian ideal. I was constantly trying to be a textbook Christian with the proper state of mind and the proper relationship with God etc., but I found that I wasn't happy trying to be humble, meek, mild, and submissive. I am not any of these things by nature and so when I couldn't be these things I felt like a failure. I suppose I should have asked God's help in shaping my character but deep down I didn't want to change, and furthermore, I hate asking anyone for help. . . .
>
> Anyway, now that I have decided to leave the church and God, I have found myself to be at peace with myself. I am not constantly berating myself for feeling darker and less-than-God-like emotions. I have no written moral rules now. I have my own sense of right and wrong, but besides that I don't have any rules to break and therefore no rules to feel guilty over when I can't live up to them. I allow myself to feel now. . . . I am much happier living by my code rather than someone else's.

Meagan seems, like Mary Daly (whose work she had not read), to have sensed the hypocrisy of the traditional (Christian) morality. As Daly writes:

> Much of traditional morality in our society appears to be the product of reactions on the part of men--perhaps guilty reactions--to the behavioral excesses of the stereotypic male. There has been a theoretical one sided

> emphasis on charity, meekness, obedience, humility, self-abnegation, sacrifice, service. Part of the problem with this moral ideology is that it became accepted not by men but by women, who hardly have been helped by an ethic which reinforces the abject female situation. (Daly 100, emphasis in original)

The lived ethic of the leaders (both religious and political) of our social institutions is, in fact, something quite opposed to this professed meekness and self-abnegation. As Daly points out, emphasizing the "basic irony in the phenomenon of this 'feminine' ethic of selflessness and sacrificial love" (101), the character traits which have come to be esteemed, in the religious world as well as in the secular, are in fact rather different from the self-effacing gentleness which is the rhetorical ideal.

> Ambitious prelates who have achieved ecclesiastical power have been praised not for their ambition but for "humility." Avaricious and ruthless politicians often speak unctuously of sacrifice, service, and dedication. (Daly 101)

Meagan's experience shows clearly that this double standard extends to the intellectual sphere as well. Patriarchal systems, Daly writes,

> demand precisely this: cautious execution of means on the part of those who are in bondage to such systems, without application of the mind's powers to the work of criticizing their purposes. (104, emphasis mine)

Official statements often found in the institutional curriculum to the effect that students must be taught to be independent thinkers, that they must not be content to merely reflect the ideas of others, are clearly not meant to suggest that students should be encouraged to challenge the rules of the institution's mythological language games (nor that they should flout its temporal structuring). This sort of thinking, it might be argued, is reserved for the "elders," those who occupy the upper echelons of the institutional hierarchy and whose intellectual expertise and long years of experience at the controls of the institutional juggernaut enable them to see more clearly the minor changes in course which weather conditions and the latest reading of the navigational instruments may seem to require. Yet my experience indicates, to the contrary, that those who seem to have the power to effect fundamental changes are often the least likely to perceive the urgency of doing so. Hampered by years of training in utilitarian modes of thought, restricted by the inertia of the institution itself, bound by their own vested interest in the present order, such "thought leaders" are generally only driven to creative questioning of traditional paradigms by a looming crisis, and even then proposed changes will generally be remedial, patchwork, designed to shore up temporarily the status quo. Thinking that transgresses the limits set by the institution is--as Meagan's experience shows--dangerous, isolating, and alienating, leading not infrequently (especially in the absence of a community offering moral support) to self-destructive patterns of thought and behavior.

> Patriarchal religion adds to the problem [the internal division of a woman's psyche] by intensifying the process through which women internalize the consciousness of the oppressor. The males' judgment having been metamorphosed into God's judgment, it becomes the religious duty of women to accept the burden of guilt . . . . What is more, the process does not stop with religion demanding that women internalize such images. It happens that those conditioned to see themselves as "bad" or "sick" in a real sense become such. (Daly 49)[16]

Thus, as I read Meagan's letter (and in particular as I reread it with the benefit of hindsight), I could not help wondering whether a few weeks of therapy and counseling were likely to offer a cure for a problem whose roots lie deeply and firmly wedged in the disjuncture between personal experience and official myth. For the moment it seems that she has rejected the image of herself as she "ought" to be which leers out from the false mirror of the linear curriculum (whose lessons, it will be recalled, begin the moment the child is taught that her sense of time must be replaced by the scheduling of books and clocks); yet, despite the strength of her memory of original participation in the rhythms of time, despite the sense of personal power which she draws from this memory, subsequent events revealed the tenacity of the Father's mirror image.

As she walked into my classroom this morning, Meagan seemed bubbly and radiant, eager to begin a new school year, happy to have laid to aside her personal and religious conflicts for the moment and to have regained the companionship of her community of friends. As her self-image has begun to emerge from the battering of weekly fluctuations between the pinnacle and the abyss, so too has her image of God and the world.

Over the past few months, as her mood has improved, she has at last chosen to step into the "light" and has, for the time being accepted unquestioningly the world view which once seemed diametrically opposed to her intuitions and experience. Readings, conversations with fundamentalist friends, religious meetings she attended during the summer, have convinced her of the futility of her unorthodox fantasies, and she is at last prepared to accept the security of a mythological enclosure which promises rest and certainty (seemingly a rather dramatic shift from the position taken the previous autumn). Questioning, probing, is for the moment, because of her fragile psychic health, out of the question.

Certainly her present reticence on this point must be respected. I can well understand the position she has, for the moment, chosen to take. I, too, have emerged from major life crises (particularly in 1973, just after moving to Rwanda to teach at an isolated mission school), psychologically battered and bleeding, my questions momentarily put aside, clinging to anything that appeared solid, yet have found as well that the passage of time brings healing, new-found strength, and a renewal of the creative forces which lie within each of us. As I look back on my most recent conversation with Me[illegible]gan, I recall with interest and some amusement that even as she affirmed her need for certainty and untroubled belief, even as she told me how she had recently walked out on a speaker who seemed to be challenging traditional eschatology, she continued to engage me in a lively discussion on the problem of textual interpretation, contrasting her current need for certainty with the dangers of accepting unquestioningly the readings of others.

Grey Door with Demons

"As a visitor, how can I best open up channels of communication when speaking with a dying friend?" a counselor was asked recently. "Above all," she answered, you must keep in mind that this is her--the friend's--death, not yours, and must allow her to cope with it as she is able." It may seem that this friend is avoiding a confrontation with the reality of her death, that she is taking shelter in the familiar certainties of new treatments and diets. Yet these responses are normal, part of a process of maturation which is not unlike the personal growth which we sometimes experience in the classroom. While the compassionate visitor may offer his friend the opportunity to discuss her apparently impending death, he should not press on her his own expectations.

Similarly, the educator must assess the psychological readiness of her students and listen to their responses. Those who are sheltered and happy within the confines of mythological closure should be encouraged to test the waters of creative uncertainty, yet should not be pushed too far nor too fast. Others, however, who seem to be wandering in a wasteland of uncertainty--unable to accept the readymade meaning embedded in the myths which underlie the linear curriculum, yet lacking confidence in their own ability to embark on a creative search for a story to fill the gap--need to glimpse the difference between the lifeless intransigence of traditional histories and theologies, and the living dynamism of a myth which has maintained its contact with the dark ground of original time. Lloyd is, apparently, such a student; though his personal charisma seems to have attracted a company of admirers, it is clear to those who know him best that beneath his self-assured persona there lies a core of emptiness, a heart of darkness with which he is unable to come to terms.

Unlike Meagan, Lloyd seems extremely reluctant to share his deeper thoughts with anyone, to be wary of all attempts on the part of figures of authority to dig into the inner reaches of his personal psychic space. Yet, though as a student in Art 20 he consistently failed to complete written projects which often provide me with a glimpse into the inner lives of my students, though in conversation he proved equally terse and inaccessible, he did spend a great deal of time during the first few months of the 1988-89 school year seeking--so it seemed to me--to express the meaning of this emptiness in paint. Sometimes working alone, sometimes in the company of a friend, both during class time and in his free moments in the afternoon and evening, Lloyd produced painting after painting in his smeared, dripping, neo-expressionist style. Whether absorbed in one of his many small studies of oozing death's heads, or trying to finish a huge panel dominated by grimacing demons flanking a large grey door, Lloyd seemed to find in his painting a means of expressing that which he was rarely able to put into words.

Lloyd's outward appearance and behavior hint at an inner struggle with irreconcilable polarities. Though in fact quite good-looking, he seems troubled by his thin frame and narrow shoulders. While his attendance at classes was surprisingly regular, he often "forgot" to hand in assignments, or, more frequently, simply made it clear that he had chosen not to do them. Though on weekends he regularly attended church services, dressed in expensive, "preppy," designer clothes (during the week he generally preferred bohemian turtle-necks, a drab trench coat, and baggy pants), his principal interests, other than drawing and painting, included a preoccupation with the quasi-religious aspects of skate boarding cults, "thrasher metal" music, and (so his acquaintances affirm) other more darkly questionable activities best only hinted at here. Surrounded by a small group of friends, he enjoyed relating story after story, each brief vignette showing clearly his preoccupation with mayhem and violence.

Just as there is a marked contrast between the "official" image he presented at church and in the classroom and the decadent artist/skater obsessed with death and chaos, so too it was impossible to be in Lloyd's company for long, I found, without noticing a striking disjuncture between his future plans and present reality. When asked about the former, Lloyd is quite willing to state that he plans to finish high school and college and go on to graduate school, where he hopes to major in psychology (his "public" or "official" view of the future, repeated on many occasions, to me as well as to family and friends). Yet, though a professional assessment of Lloyd's scholastic abilities (performed in seventh grade in response to a suspected learning disability) suggests that he is indeed quite capable of doing excellent work in the field of his choice,[17] his unwillingness to complete routine assignments and his obvious desire to demonstrate to teachers that he is not bound by the rules of the petty "games" required of him by the official curriculum (reflected in his poor marks in most subjects) point to an inability to bend the chaotic rhythms of his personal sense of time into conformity with the intransigent solar clock.

Brief insights which Lloyd has allowed me into his world suggest that he is in fact quite aware of these disjunctures, that he feels trapped between the reality of a not-too-unpleasant present (marred, to be sure, by the constant, "meaningless" demands made of him by parents and teachers) and an inescapable, ever-threatening future, the abyss which looms constantly on his temporal horizon. The future, he told me (attempting to explain a drawing he had done one morning in art class), "sucks, . . . it sucks you down into it," into the black "nothingwhere" he described so vividly a few months later:

> Black. Nothing. The green fields float through my window as i sit and fix the hole where the rain gets in and keeps my mind from wondering. black. black. blah . . . ah . . . i'm out walking now. i stride down the well beaten path to nothingwhere, mywhere. i feel the cold sensation of death at my back and . . . i'm back in schooool again. think. do. boored. i drift in and out from therewhere to herewhere. black, black, black. nothing. nothing. (Jan. 1989; ellipses and unconventional spelling in original)

Toward the end of the semester, Lloyd finally completed a large painting which he had apparently abandoned several weeks earlier and, as he often did, sought out my comments. As we spent a few moments together in discussion it became clear that this picture (Grey Door with Demons alluded to earlier) was deeply autobiographical. A thin, morose-looking figure stands before the door, surrounded by grimacing demons--unmistakably, as Lloyd confirmed, the artist himself. Though the door seems to offer the possibility of escape, Lloyd agreed that the demons which await him on the other side--in the future of "limitless horizons" which the official myths hold out as an incentive to endure the eternal "not-yet" of the linear present--seem no less threatening.

For me, as well as for his parents and many of his friends, Lloyd will continue to be a puzzling enigma. Yet, though it is evident that even Lloyd himself lacks a clear picture of his place in an unsettling cosmos, it seems equally obvious that he senses a degree of artificiality--even of meaninglessness--in the carefully ordered arena of linear time. While he must remain something of a mystery, Lloyd has been of considerable interest to me both because of his abundant--though sporadic and often misdirected--creative energy and because he seems to epitomize in many respects the students whose "sullenness and withdrawal" (in Williams' words) speaks eloquently of the failure of our mythological tradition. Though like Lloyd, a few of them may have taken the first tentative steps toward the development of a personal mythos, such students seem generally unable to supply a viable alternative to the imposed fictions of the linear curriculum, filling the void left by the death of traditional deities with the equally sterile, equally ideological, myths of popular culture. Unable to integrate the darkness, the dionysian alinearity which is a fundamental aspect of their experience of time, with the apollonian tidiness and order of the official curriculum, many of these students continue to perform what they sense dimly are meaningless rituals to the memory of vanishing gods. Inevitably, however, they have begun to discover that the rewards offered in exchange for this service are unable to fill their deeper lack.

Meagan, too, seems to be a dionysian "wolf" confined to an apollonian cage, a student whose lunar rhythms are in perpetual conflict with the relentless mechanics of solar time.[18] Like Lloyd and the countless inaudible voices he seems to represent, she senses the deficiency of traditional paradigms, yet she is a refreshingly unusual student who has the creative power to take a measure of control over her own fictions. Even for her, however, the struggle is an unequal one. Denied the personal support of others who have begun to recognize the inadequacy of traditional myths (until recently she was not even aware of the work of feminist mythologians and their surprisingly similar expressions of dissatisfaction with traditional, patriarchal images of temporal experience), she has understandably felt compelled, for the time being, to leave the "uncharted forest night" with its terrifying winds and retreat to sheltering walls and familiar terrain.

The hours of thought which I have devoted to these chapters have led me to a somewhat unsettling reconsideration of my own position with respect to traditional myths. In many ways I have glimpsed within myself Lloyd, the sullen anti-authoritarian, and Meagan, the creative, though vacillating, mystic. Fortunately--for I see clearly the near-impossibility of carrying out such a task in isolation--I have found a group of friends of similar background with whom I meet regularly (as a part of weekly church attendance) to discuss these questions. While the official study group meets a few doors away to pursue the week's assigned topic (which has, for the past several months, centered on the book of Revelation) the alternate group with which I spend the hour has generally accepted this topic as its starting point and, from there, has been led in a variety of different directions; most recently, into a study of the meaning of _time_. With traditional cosmogonies and eschatologies called into question, I too sometimes experience time as a black hole sucking in all familiar landmarks, a vast, infinitely dark elevator shaft having neither bottom nor top in which I find myself tumbling in free-fall. The initial exhilaration experienced as ancient walls begin to crumble inevitably, I find, gives way to a gnawing anxiety not unlike that of many of my students. In such circumstances, it is tempting to turn, on the one hand, to the security of unquestioning belief or, given that this avenue is for many of us forever closed, to the radical openness of "postmodern" thought:

> If "sawing off the branch on which one is sitting" seems foolhardy to men of common sense, it is not so for [postmodern thinkers, most notably Jacques] Derrida; for they suspect that if they fall there is no "ground" to hit and that the most clear-sighted act may be a certain reckless sawing, a calculated dismemberment or deconstruction of the great cathedral-like trees in which Man has taken shelter for millennia. (Culler 149)

Though such a position may indeed be possible in theory, most educators would agree that it is impossible in practice to live one's life as a radical skeptic. Thus my experience and reflections have led me, in this study, to suggest a careful reconsideration of Culler's metaphor. As we fall from the state of grace represented by these "cathedral-like trees" we will indeed, I believe, hit something; and the ancient Earth which breaks our fall is beginning once again--after millennia of apollonian preoccupation with the lofty deities of the heavens--to reassert itself as the source of power needed to restore the ever-receding balance between body and mind, "hell" and "heaven," darkness and light.

This study has suggested the possibility of a middle path between our institutionalized dependence on the security of linear myths and the despairing nihilism which may well result when this artificial shelter begins to collapse. Indeed, such nihilism is itself the product of our linear dichotomization of experience, the not-surprising offspring of a tradition which has, for centuries, insisted that its own myths offer the only conceivable source of meaning in what is otherwise an alien world.

As I have suggested throughout this study, linear myths seem to have strained our relationship with the earth to the breaking point. Yet rather that leading to despair, the possible demise of the institutions which have promoted a selfish and domineering relationship with the beings with whom we share her resources might better be seen by today's educators as an opportunity, an invitation to guide their students into the transitional period which lies before us.

Chapter Five: Toward a Transitional Curriculum

I. Introduction

> And what is the truth, the ethics, that diversity speaks? It is . . . that we each have our own mythology, our own real possibilities to live out; that we are each "our own central metaphor." In the biological and ecological world, homogeneity spells rigidity and death. (Berman 264)

Graduate students are not infrequently asked to present a brief summary of their research topic to their colleagues, and it was on one such occasion, in March of 1989, that I began--toward the end of an evening seminar--to discuss the subject of time with two colleagues, Lisa and Marvyn. I have always found my approach to this topic difficult to present in a concise manner, yet as I attempted to give a brief summary I soon found myself standing aside, taking notes as these two students seized upon my topic and began discussing it from deeply held, yet diametrically opposed, points of view. Marvyn, whose vision of his own place in time is strongly anchored in the linear tradition, was completely baffled, even somewhat offended, by Lisa's intuitively alinear experience. Marvyn (the graduate student alluded to in chapter two for whom the purpose of existence is to "make history") sees himself as a radically unique individual who was created in accordance with a pre-ordained plan and for whom a special role has been reserved in the drama of history. Living-in-time is, as he describes it, an utterly rational experience; life, when viewed from the perspective of the great plan of linear history, is purposive and reasonable. The purposive rationality of historical time extends into every detail of his existence, providing the framework against which each personal choice may be measured. In short, behind the experiences of life there stands a transcendental signified, an all-encompassing Text which holds a rational answer to the great questions of life, giving meaning to the role of each actor in the cosmic conflict.

Not surprisingly, then, Lisa's view of time was, for Marvyn, utterly incomprehensible. "It doesn't make sense, Lisa," he insisted several times that evening. Yet, though I too found Lisa's view of the world in many respects foreign to my experience, I was captivated by her insights which are, as she explained, built on years of immersion in the temporal rhythms of body and earth. Though in the course of my research I had begun to sense the meaning of an experience of time which was prior to the mechanical structuring which was so much a part of my own background, I had not yet spoken with a student who could clearly articulate this meaning.

While Lisa appears to have adapted very well indeed to the rigors of a world of clocks and books--she recently accepted a demanding and quite remunerative position with a government agency--a subsequent interview left no doubt that her original experience of time as a living rhythm continues to form the "ground of her being" (in Berman's words).

"Here, I feel like a caged animal," as she bluntly phrased it. "I have to work with the system, I have no choice. If I want to survive here, I have to play the game of time. Sometimes it bothers me to no end."

Lisa grew up in Mexico City, where quality of time, rather than quantity, regulates the day's activities. Since those early years, she has lived between two cultures having very different views of time: though she has attended school in Alberta since first grade, she has returned to her childhood home on numerous occasions. As she describes it, her experience of time in Mexico City has a magical, almost childlike quality--even though many of her "timeless" experiences there date from her adult years--which she would gladly (but for personal obligations) give up her respected position to regain.[1] Yet, though the magic of such an unstructured existence is apparently not possible here (within the temporal grid imposed by the routine of life in a Canadian city), her view of the world has been strongly influenced by the temporal language which her early encounters with the rhythms of alinear time have taught her. Each of us, as chapter four has shown, has had an experience of the time of the body, an original immersion in the rhythms of the world around us which defies the somewhat artificial distinctions of self and other, ego and environment, imposed upon us by linear time. Because Lisa grew up in a world which has, as she describes it, a much greater respect for the body's inner rhythms, she has never lost the understanding of time which is for most of us but a dim memory.

Because her sense of the unique individuality of the self is rather muted and diffuse, she feels a degree of identification with her surroundings which most of us would associate with an atavistic animism. For Lisa, the radical "otherness" of the world of sensory experience which we tend to take for granted is somewhat illusory. There is a thin shell, she suggested, between our world of objective "reality" and another realm, perhaps equally real, in which--as in a dream--these divisions melt away. The timeless knowledge of this atemporal domain often breaks into her more tangible reality of linear time (most commonly in vivid dreams which foretell or coincide with an actual physical occurrence about which she had no other source of knowledge: the death of a relative, perhaps, or a personal difficulty which is troubling a close friend).

Because her experience of the world makes it impossible for her to establish a clear distinction between objective reality and subjective fantasy, even her own personal history is open to doubt: "I'm never really sure about half the things that 'happened' to me. Did they really happen, or did I just imagine them?" Though such a statement might, in certain contexts, appear to offer sufficient grounds for a thorough psychiatric evaluation, this observation has since been confirmed by others who have had a similar experience of non-Western time, and seems to suggest the strength of her personal inner vision rather than her detachment from our mundane, limited, sphere of "reality."

Not surprisingly, then, Lisa made it clear that she is unable to accept the traditional (Western) image of the self. While Marvyn insists on his unique individuality, Lisa had no difficulty with the idea that there might be another person exactly like her, a sort of spiritual clone, on the university campus; that there might be thousands of such beings, differing only by accident of birth, scattered around the world. Nor is it surprising to learn that she tends to challenge the sharp lines which the curriculum has drawn around events which took place in the past. Just as Marvyn's unique individual gives way, in her view of the world, to a potentially infinite series of beings, all of whom are a part of a larger network of consciousness, so his unidirectional cosmic drama becomes a series of endlessly recurring cycles. Her focus on the quality of time leads her to an emphasis, not on historical events, dates, and heroes, but rather on an event's meaning to her existence, thus blurring our traditional sharp distinction between history and mythology. Of more importance than the abstract chronicle of history are the seemingly insignificant events, such as an accident, illness, or a persistent personal shortcoming, which most of us prefer to forget or ignore, yet which can, in this view of time, take on a paradoxical importance as a guide towards further personal growth. If the lessons of history are to play a role in shaping our understanding of temporal experience, Lisa seems to suggest, they must move beyond an ideologically motivated dedication to the well-being of the institution and begin to offer students a clear path toward spiritual development and personal empowerment.

Though Lisa offers a view of the world which is perhaps rather puzzling in some respects, it seems to point the way to a better understanding of students such as Meagan and Lloyd, whose experience of the world is, like my own, rather painfully divided between the official myths and a more deeply personal, intuitive level of understanding. It would be a mistake, I believe Lisa would agree, to conclude from her story that Mexico City is a sort of earthly paradise; her experience does, however, offer a degree of insight into the sense of loss which is so much a part of the story told by Meagan, and may be clearly glimpsed as well, I believe, in the mute disaffection of students like Lloyd. Lisa has grown up in a world where the organic rhythms of body and earth are allowed to enter more fully into the public sphere; where, as she pointed out, "being late is no big deal," and where the passage of time is measured in terms of simple, yet meaningful, daily rituals rooted in community relationships--greetings, seasonal routines--rather than arbitrarily scheduled by a clock. Her account evokes, on one hand, the magic which, until it is suppressed by artificial rhythms and structures of clocks and books, is inherent in our experience of time; while on the other she paints a striking picture of the dissonance which results when mechanical timekeeping comes into conflict with the organic rhythms of the body.

The Need for a Transitional Curriculum[2]

Our understanding of curriculum is itself a product of an artificial temporal structuring which has created intractable divisions between subject and object, mind and body, light and darkness. For this reason, it will be seen that the project of proposing a curriculum suited to a world in which these divisions have been eroded is somewhat paradoxical. If Berman is correct, for example, in proposing that "ultimately, ego-consciousness may not be viable for our continuation on this planet," that the "end of alienation may lie not in the reform of the ego, or in complementing it with primary process [an awareness of the 'time of the body'], but in its abolition" (302), then the path which leads to the end of these divisions may lead, similarly, to the end of curriculum as we know it. While I tend to see this as an unnecessarily extreme position, it has the merit of suggesting--as will be shown later--that any viable model of future consciousness (and thus of education as well) must be firmly rooted in a relationship with the earth. Our future, though ultimately unknowable, would seem to be unthinkable without a rediscovery of our dark, ancient roots; a reestablishment of the balance which our increasing alienation from the rhythms of earth and body has upset.[3]

While it may well be that many of the suggestions made in this chapter point towards the eventual demise of the spatio-temporal structuring which has come to define curriculum as we know it, it is clearly of more immediate interest to today's students and educators to discuss the characteristics of the transitional period in which we are beginning to find ourselves.

The relationship between human beings and their world which would emerge during this period is, perhaps, much like that described by Lisa, and her experience of time might (in conjunction with insights derived from a number of other sources) be considered as a possible model of the transitional self. Lisa has incorporated much of the wisdom of archaic modes of thought into a more critically self-analytical framework. In this model, the sense of self, of one's unique individuality, is softer and more diffuse. The transitional "ego" would both feel intuitively and acknowledge intellectually the importance of the body as a door to the dark ground of our being, understanding its place in the cycles of time in terms of an appreciation of its primordial connection to a greater whole. The evolution of a culture based on such an understanding of the meaning of time and the body

> would of necessity erase our contemporary feeling of homelessness, and the sense that our personal reality is at odds with official reality. The infinite spaces whose silences terrified Pascal may appear to men and women of the future as extensions of a biosphere that is nurturing and benevolent. Meaning will no longer be something that must be found and imposed on an absurd universe; it will be given, and, as a result, men and women will have a

> feeling of cosmic connectedness, of belonging to a larger pattern. (Berman 282-3)

In this transitional period, curriculum will be, I would suggest, of the utmost importance, as reflective educators begin to lead their students toward an understanding of their place in the world in which knowledge is recognized to be much deeper and broader that the verbal, rational, abstract learning which dominates the linear curriculum. The need for such a movement away from a curriculum based on the myths of linear time has, I believe, been made clear in preceding chapters. While I have generally preferred to emphasize the negative impact which the linear demand for closure has had on me personally as well as on my students, I have also hinted at the broader consequences of our traditional emphasis on historical conflict. As the devastating implications of the fundamental divisions which lie at the heart of this tradition become increasingly evident, it is becoming clear that a transitional curriculum is being forced upon us (most clearly and pressingly by ecological pressures which are a product of our destructive relationship with the earth). Berman is not alone in proposing that the apparently insoluble problems which confront our society offer an opening for today's educators, a compelling reason to seek an alternative to the destructive attitudes which are deeply ingrained in our foundational mythologies.

> Of course, if one believes that only violent revolution produces substantive change, . . . then planetary culture does not have much of a chance. If, however, we are

> talking of a change on the scale of the disintegration of the Roman Empire [where change is the product of progressive internal collapse], . . . then our utopian vision starts to appear increasingly realistic. In fact, one of the most effective agents of this set of changes is the decay of advanced industrial society itself. (280)

Letting in the Darkness

One of the fundamental divisions which the transitional curriculum must overcome is, as I see it, that between the sacred and the secular. From the moment our students recognize their power to reexamine their place in the cosmos, to ask fundamental questions which push beyond the limits set by the linear curriculum, they begin to blur this important, yet arbitrary, division. As Mitrano points out, many educators have begun to realize as a result of their own experience that

> at the deepest levels, education has a fundamental spiritual quality. . . . [W]hen one takes seriously the . . . contention that previously unexamined assumptions form the framework of our concept of reality, one is dealing with theology. . . . (212-3)

The secular curriculum, as we know it today, rejects the spiritual and the supernatural, generally taking an agnostic position toward these forms of knowledge since they are not subject to logical proof and demonstration. On the other hand, while the religious curriculum (as I have known it and as presented in chapter four) accepts the spiritual, and is thus in some respects somewhat more in tune with students like Meagan, it has attempted to fit spiritual knowledge into an antiquated, mechanistic model, rejecting as "pagan" an open, creative approach to the spiritual.

A purely secular curriculum is, this study has suggested, fundamentally unsatisfying, in that it fails to acknowledge the vital role which myth plays in each of our lives; yet while apparently rejecting myth altogether, this tradition offers in its place its own set of arid myths, its own substitute for the original knowledge which each of us carries within. The religious curriculum senses dimly this mistake, yet generally offers an almost equally unsatisfying substitute in the form of prescribed answers to fundamental questions. Both have forgotten the meaning of an individual encounter with the Self, the power of our original experience of time, and have striven to fill this gap with their own deficient substitutes.

> It is knowledge of my Self that I am searching for in examining my experience. The 'search' metaphor that is prevalent [in the work of 'reconceptualist' curriculum theorists such as Wm. Pinar] and which seems to describe quite accurately my experience, also suggests that I am somehow 'lost.' This is in fact what has happened to many in pursuit of what is called education but what is in reality training, conditioning and manipulating. (Mitrano 213)

As Mitrano suggests, the individual search, the autobiographical quest for a personal mythology, will be of central importance in the transitional curriculum. As this search leads us within, back to the darkness of original time which the solar curriculum has driven out of our classrooms, students and teachers alike will begin to regain a measure of the power over their personal lives which school-time has usurped.

School-time, as I have come to understand it in the context of this study, represents a disempowering imposition of the thoughts of others upon the mind of the student. School-time, in dispelling the darkness into which the tree of knowledge sends its roots, has broken our contact with the deeper Self. This imposition of alien ideas and images is becoming more and more pervasive, and begins, as chapter three has shown, from the moment an artificial schedule is imposed upon the child's natural sense of time. The process which is set in motion from the moment of birth continues relentlessly during the preschool years. The home, which once had room for the formative spaces of quiet and darkness, has today been permeated by the omnipresent specter of linear ideology. Television in particular, I would suggest, has become a substitute for the wisdom of the aged women and men who were once the child's mentors; its vacuous text and images, chained relentlessly to the time of the clock, teach the child to relinquish her own memories of the Origin, to absorb passively the codified knowledge of others.

The Enlightenment . . . has rendered all of us who live

> in Western civilization citizens of the light. And of lights. Questers after left-brain--which is light-oriented--satisfaction. The invention of the light bulb and electricity . . . was a marvelous outgrowth of the Enlightenment's technological achievements. And with the light bulb there came also the radio . . . With television we experience a new kind of light machine--one that combines eyes and ears to allure us out of ourselves. (Matthew Fox 134)

Yet the light which has flooded our landscape has also driven the moon from the skies and parched the earth.

> What price have we paid as a people for all this light? We have become afraid of the dark. Afraid of no light. Of silence, therefore. Of image-lessness. . . . And, if Eckhart is correct about the power of subtraction versus the power of addition, our souls in the process shrivel up. For growth of the human person takes place in the dark. Under ground. In subterranean passages. (Matthew Fox 135)

The transitional curriculum, by restoring a measure of this lost darkness, will point students toward a renewal of our contact with the earth and thus with ourselves, though this dimming of the lights will inevitably be accompanied by a measure of confusion and pain, at least at the outset.

The thoughtful reader has no doubt been keenly aware of the "autobiographical" nature of this study, and has sensed that much of this work arises from a personal crisis in the experience of the writer. Indeed, I have, over the months devoted to this work, come to appreciate more fully the role which crises play in furthering our education, in tearing down the walls behind which we have sought shelter, so that we may once again glimpse the sky and step out upon the earth. The search for a personal mythos, as my experience confirms, does indeed seem to find its driving force in "our inability to close the gaps between language [i.e. official myth] and reality" (Lauter 10). The solar curriculum recognizes the importance of preserving in the student's mind a state of complacency and self-satisfaction; yet if education is indeed to enter a phase of creative transition, it can only do so as students begin, through an encounter with the gaps in our official texts, to recognize the power which lies within each of them. This process of transformation is initiated as artificially imposed images of the self (brought into focus as the student sketches her personal autobiography) begin to wither, and proceeds as she reclaims her own creative potential which our tradition has so successfully suppressed.

In acknowledging the centrality of autobiography in the curriculum, the transitional educator will thus recognize the positive potential of kenosis (a Greek word meaning "emptying") in the learning experience of her students, and will lead each of them, patiently and gently, no doubt, yet insistently, to glimpse their own power to rewrite the myths by which they live their lives.[4] This educator will, in the initial phases of the process, guide students toward a new understanding of the meaning of the void, the darkness and emptiness which precedes the creative act. The emptiness which accompanies the passing of familiar paradigms will then become a crisis which each of us has the strength to face, and to which each of us will bring a personal vision of the possibilities inherent in an open future.

Playing with Death

The transitional curriculum has much to learn from archaic traditions which have long recognized the important role of autobiography and kenosis in the education of the young person.

> American Indian cultures, in general, permit and encourage their children to turn to the earth whenever there is a crisis in their life by sending them out when they are small to meditate in nature. Later, in adolescence, this culminates in the Vision Quest. (LaChapelle 108)

Rooted in the personal crises of everyday life, the vision quest serves as a catalyst, bringing on a deeply personal encounter with the death of the self. This understanding of education is by no means wholly absent from the European tradition, and has been preserved in the writings of teachers such as Hildegarde of Bingen (1098-1179), Meister Eckhart (1260-1329), and Julian of Norwich (1342-1415), and more recently in the many alchemical manuscripts dating from the time of the Renaissance.[5] Like other archaic traditions (in particular, the Native American vision quest), the alchemical craft saw the quest for knowledge as a process of personal growth, the building of a relationship between the practitioner and the material universe. In spite of their sometimes inaccessible language, these texts point clearly to the importance of death to self and to the familiar paradigms through which we have come to understand the world. The first phase of the work, as these manuscripts show, concludes with

> the _nigredo_, in which the lead [Pb] is dissolved and the solution becomes black. This is the "dark night of the soul," the point at which the persona has been dissolved and the Self has not yet appeared on the horizon. (Berman 75)

> Thus death, which is a separation, is followed by a long process of decay which lasts until all is putrefied and the opposites dissolved in the liquid _nigredo_. This darkness darker than darkness, this 'black of blacks,' is the first sure sign that one is on the right path; hence the alchemical aphorism: 'No generation without corruption.' (DeRola 11)

An encounter with the nigredo forces upon the student a radical reappraisal of her understanding of time and of the sequential rationality which governs the linear curriculum. The intense darkness of this stage in the journey becomes the "only available reality," and,

> since the sense of the linear flow of time is lost, there appears to be no way out. . . . The soul has to face a

> strange paradox: in order to be able to continue its journey, it has to accept that it will stay [in this realm of darkness] forever. (Grof 76)

This is, indeed, the fundamental teaching of the darkness: each of us, in order to progress on our journey toward selfhood, must learn to let go of our preconceived "certainties" and to acknowledge our own ignorance; each of us, in the midst of our daily rounds of busy doing, must learn as well the meaning of being.

> The need for silence that Zen speaks of, that wisdom literature celebrates, that Eckhart praises, . . . is not just about oral silence. Silence means the letting go of all images . . . , whether of time or of space, of inner or of outer. It is a radical letting go of language. . . . It is being. A being still. Eckhart puts it this way:
>
> > One should love God mindlessly, without mind or mental activities or images or representations. Bare your soul of all mind and stay there without mind. (Matthew Fox 136,7)

It is not desirable, nor is it necessary, that each student experience the full weight of this darkness. While it must, in order to restore the balance upset by centuries of neglect, come to take a central place in the transitional curriculum, our students' encounter with the nigredo need not produce the anxiety which is so common among adolescents who have been taught to mistrust their original identification with the rhythms of the earth.

> [I]f the culture does not purposely induce anxiety

> because of the knowledge of death as ours does, 'Awareness of death acts as a catalyst on all the child's knowledge . . . and brings alertness to his/her acts' (Pearce). It provides an exciting challenge rather than a source of anxiety and dread. (LaChapelle 107)

By accepting and learning from the cycles of darkness as they recur, like the phases of the moon, throughout the educational experience, a level of understanding is reached which would seem to make a crushing confrontation with Hecate--the devouring aspect of the goddess of time--unnecessary. As the place of the darkness in the text of life is accepted, and as its power as a teacher is recognized, the way is cleared for the emergence of a personal vision of the meaning of time. "We must each develop our own dream of the earth and find a way to it--mystically, empirically, through revelation or evolution--and share our findings with each other" (Leveson 146), and in archaic traditions the dark of the moon was the time of divination, illumination, and healing (Sjoo 183).

> The dark night of our souls is a special occasion for divine birth and opportunity, provided we let the darkness be darkness and the nothingness be nothingness, at least for a while. Without nothingness there will be no creation or re-creation. (Matthew Fox 154)

As archaic traditions recognize, play is one of the best teachers of letting go. The child who plays with the earth is indeed, as LaChapelle suggests, playing with death, and this play is an important step in the process of learning trust. Through play, the encounter with death and darkness which is central to the transitional curriculum is put more clearly into perspective as a part of life. Just as play with classmates helps the student build a sense of the human community, so play with the earth leads her toward an understanding of her broader connectedness, an awareness of the larger community which includes the earth herself.

> If the child has been allowed natural development, [she] has a 'period of intensive and ecstatic play in which varying the possibilities of one's survival tools are explored' (Pearce). This is the joyous, yet peril-filled time of childhood--the time for walking limbs high above the ground in follow-the-leader, for jumping off garage roofs, and other such activities. (LaChapelle 107)

Unlike the organized play of competitive sports, which often perpetuates the linear myths of conflict and conquest, games of balance, in which the child learns to cooperate with the center-directed pull of the earth (LaChapelle refers in particular to skiing, skateboarding, and dancing), teach lessons of trust and interdependence.

> These children are not going to be as ready to believe all the culturally induced fear and anxiety thrown at them by schools and parents when they know they can trust the earth. The more they trust the earth, the less they can be reached by the weapon of fear which our culture uses to force people to conform. (LaChapelle 107)

Perhaps even more fundamentally, play with the earth offers students a model of time, and thus of knowledge, which is in keeping with their first experiences of the world. Like our encounter with silence and darkness, play breaks down the traditional dichotomies on which the curriculum is grounded, including the sequential logic of linear time itself.

> There is a common experiential state which is present in various forms of play, and also under certain conditions in other activities which are not normally thought of as play. . . . It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which *there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future*. (Csikszentmihalyi, in LaChapelle 122; emphasis mine)

Thus play, in particular the play between body and earth, opens the door to the darkness of the lunar labyrinth itself, to the serpentine domain of Dionysus, where the upward struggle of the linear curriculum gives way to an endless spiral of erring, where the transcendental signified itself is at last recognized as a fiction.

> Play is an unending game that stages the drama of the death of God, the disappearance of self, and end of

> history. . . . [This] absence of an absolute foundation is, in effect, the lack of a fixed point of reference or center of gravity, which, by grounding heavy thoughts and weighty deeds, functions to prevent exorbitance. The death of God, in other words, unleashes the aberrant levity of free play. One could, in fact, go so far as to 'call *play* the absence of the transcendental signified' (Derrida). This absence implies the 'limitlessness of play' . . . (Mark Taylor 159)

This is hardly a new model of the cosmos, though it is indeed foreign to traditional Western paradigms which parallel, the reader will recall from chapter two, our androcentric understanding of knowledge. Though Einstein, certainly at least in part due to his years of work and study in the Western tradition, balked at suggestions that the universe is orchestrated by a whimsical cosmic gambler (Davies 102), recent developments in quantum mechanics and astrophysics make the ancient Oriental paradigm seem increasingly credible.

> The world, as they say in India, is God's "play." It is a wondrous, thoughtless play: a rough play, the roughest, cruelest, most dangerous, and most difficult, with no holds barred. Often, it seems, it is the best who lose and the worst who win. But winning, finally, is not the aim . . . (Campbell *Myths* 126)

The transitional curriculum, as it leads students into the "lawless land of erring, . . . [the] liminal world of Dionysus, . . . who calls every wandering mark to carnival, comedy, and carnality," will begin to blur the fundamental distinction between the serious and the non-serious which has hampered attempts to reconceptualize the educational process (Mark Taylor 157,8). The transitional curriculum, in rejecting the superficial tragedy of the linear view of time, in acknowledging the openness and contingency of human existence, sees beyond the closure of historical drama to the openness of cosmic comedy. As Meeker writes, the

> tragic view of man, for all its flattering optimism, has led to cultural and biological disaster, and it is time to look for alternatives which might better encourage the survival of our own and other species. . . .
>
> Tragedy demands that choices be made among alternatives; comedy assures that all choice is likely to be in error and that survival depends upon finding accommodations that will permit all parties to endure. (In LaChapelle 148)

While the tragic hero knows, and is weighted down by the enormous gravity of his knowledge, the student who understands that light and darkness alike are a part of the play of life has learned to laugh.

> A man [sic] of knowledge chooses a path and follows it; and then he looks and rejoices and laughs; and then he sees and knows. He knows that his life will be over altogether too soon; he knows that he, as well as everybody else, is not going anywhere; he knows, because

he sees, that nothing is more important than anything else. In other words, a man of knowledge has no honor, no dignity, no family, no name, no country, but only life to be lived . . . " (Castaneda, in LaChapelle 148)

Writing as Play with Death

The laughter of lunar time, the recognition that the transcendental signified which we have sought as an anchor for our erring institutions is a fiction, paradoxically places the world on a firmer foundation. On a deeper level, indeed, this "fiction"--as it is rooted in our earliest experience of the rhythms of body and earth--is in many respects more real than the succession of artificial structures which the linear curriculum has taken as its foundation. As chapter three has shown, this curriculum is the product of a tradition which, in an effort to distance itself from the darkness and carnality of our material origins, has turned away from these ancient memories of the primordial mother and sought in their place a more "noble" genealogy. Yet this move, while it seems to place our institutions on higher intellectual ground, has cast an unbearable burden on the foundational myths through which we have sought to legitimate our claims to nobility and dominion. Because of our insistence on a univocal, historical reading of the text, the innumerable books which inundate our classrooms and offices are of value only as they can be shown to be linked to the original Word which chains them to the bedrock of Ultimate Reality. As Mark Taylor notes,

> books do not possess intrinsic worth but are valuable to the extent that they point beyond themselves to the Book. In different terms, books are signs that refer to a "transcendental signified." By pre-scribing or programming all true books, this referent forms the stable center or "bottom line" of every sign. (81)

The written word, though indispensable to education as we know it, has nonetheless been touched by the original curse which drove Man from the garden. Lacking the transparency of the original Logos, subject to the same infirmities which plague its mortal readers, the writing which has been grudgingly accepted by the linear tradition as a necessary evil remains a disturbing testimony to the limits of human control. Each new book, though it seems to add a piece to our imperfect picture of Reality, serves as well as a reminder of the gaping void which remains.

> The hole, which is the chance for the book, represents a haunting absence, which can be read as another shadow of death. Throughout the pages of the book, "death strolls between the letters" (Derrida). (Mark Taylor 91)

In the transitional curriculum, writing will be recognized as an important manifestation of the play with death which leads us beyond the imposed paradigms and metaphors with which our emphasis on reading has burdened us. In the transitional classroom students will begin at last to face the possibility that the search for the Book, the Universal Cosmic Grammar, is, if perhaps not wholly fruitless, indeed endless. As Borges (whose parable of an infinite, labyrinthine library was cited in chapter three) confesses:

> Like all men of the Library, I have traveled in my youth, I have wandered in search of a book, perhaps a catalogue of catalogues . . . (51)

Education, during the transitional period, will come to be seen as a search, a never-ending voyage from text to text; yet it will also, and more fundamentally, be experienced as a quest which leads us to look within and to trust the answers we find there. While the linear curriculum, with its emphasis on passive reading, has arrogated the power to select and to interpret, the transitional curriculum, as it accepts the "challenge of the writable (scriptible) text" (Belsey 125), will restore this power to students and teachers. In place of the immutable Truth which was once central to our understanding of education, knowledge will be seen as a shifting tapestry of fictions, an ever-changing play of light and shadow which leads beyond the fragmented ego of linear time towards an experience of the greater Self which lies beneath.

> Reb Jacob, who was my first teacher, believed in the virtue of the lie because, so he said, there is no writing without lie. And writing is the way of God. (Jabes, in Mark Taylor)

Myth, as Nietzsche notes, is the "vital lie" which gives meaning to our interaction with the cosmos (in Pinar

Autobiography 16). Yet this lie must, as a part of any meaningful experience of education, be born anew for each of us, the product of our own experience of a unique time and place.

Writing, in a curriculum which seeks the dissolution of the traditional dichotomies which divide our world, begins as a more active form of reading. Traditional texts which we often read passively, seeking little more than a confirmation of our preconceived views of the world, will be opened to a diversity of reinterpretations. The Bible, for example, while it remains an official text for many students, today excites few of them. An active reading (guided by Mary Daly or Matthew Fox, for example) has the potential to bring it to life once again. This active reading will in turn lead students towards a new understanding of writing which will have much of the character of the ancient hieroglyph, the sacred picture which lies at the root of all writing. As Mark Taylor points out, there is

> a very close connection between painting (zographia) and writing (graphe). In its early hieroglyphic form, writing is virtually indistinguishable from painting and drawing. The hieroglyph is a pictograph; as such, it is neither subordinate to speech nor bound to a phonic alphabet. (101)

Poetry and painting, dance and drama, these and other modes of "writing" can serve as particularly powerful forms of autobiographical expression which, in their role as play with death, break down the paradigms of linear time and lead us back to the silence of the Origin. As many painters are aware,

> the relationship between being and non-being . . . may be sparked by the artist's encountering the brilliant colors on the palette or the inviting rough whiteness of the canvas. Painters have described the excitement of this moment: it seems like a re-enactment of the creation story, with _being_ suddenly becoming alive and possessing a vitality of its own. (May 91, emphasis mine)

Or, in the words of a student who has experienced for himself the potential of an encounter with writing,

> There is so much joy in not having to use words to convey meaning and truth. . . . Experiencing this new kind of time is almost always relaxing and healing. . . . I am beginning to respond to an inner "drive" within _me_ that is very old; it is inscribed in my archetypal depths. (in Matthew Fox 196)

Yet, while this student speaks of the _joy_ of writing, many others will find their initial encounter with the openness of the writable text disorienting and disillusioning. Though the spiral path of writing leads toward the time of the Origin, the forgotten source of all creative power, our first steps on this path are often taken in darkness and uncertainty. As Leonard suggests, "writing"

> creates in the receiver a kind of death. To receive the work, our customary masks and ways of looking at things are torn off, and having experienced a sort of death we

> stand naked, opened up to all existence. . . . [Writing] 'strikes us in the face, perhaps also in order to fling us into the void of the center, which is the center of transformation and birth' (Neumann). (Leonard 133)

Much of our education pulls us away from ourselves, dissipating the energy through which we might otherwise come to a clearer understanding of our creative potential. Intentionally, it would seem, education as I have experienced it creates a dependency on the words and images of others. "Writing"--as it begins to take a more central place in the curriculum--will lead us back to the center and breathe new life into our educational praxis.

> Teachers of all disciplines--sciences, arts, religion, history--need to recover the power of art as centering [, to appreciate its role in the ongoing] cosmogenesis for which we are all responsible. If education is to be an instrument in social transformation, education itself must be transformed. It must allow art as centering to breathe life into whole curricula and whole educational systems. (Matthew Fox 192,3)

I have, in these paragraphs, intentionally avoided the use of the word "art" because of the elitist connotations which it has taken on in the context of the Western tradition. Just as linear myths, with their emphasis on time-as-conflict, too often distort our vital experiences of play with the earth and with one another, so too our tradition has banished playfulness from writing. The creative power through which we deepen our own encounter with time and place has been crushed by the gravity of theorists for whom writing serves as an escape from, rather than play with, death. The artist, in keeping with this tradition, has been portrayed as a heroic titan struggling in solitude with the forces of darkness and chaos. This understanding of art, in perpetuating the dichotomies which haunt the linear curriculum, acts to cut us off from the play with nothingness which is essential to personal growth and creativity. Students who are not of this heroic, non-relational bent are consigned to the role of passive "readers," docile consumers who must leave the creation and selection of their texts to recognized experts.

The "writing" which will be central to the transitional curriculum, though it will include the arts as we generally understand them, will do so in the spirit of the "lunar laughter" mentioned earlier. As all children realize, mythmaking is a game, and though our techniques and subject matter may change as we mature, the importance of the process, the personal growth which occurs as the work proceeds, must never be eclipsed by our concern for the product. As Joseph Campbell suggests,

> In art, in myth, in rites, we enter the sphere of the dream awake. (Campbell Creative 671)

Much like ritual, which in archaic, earth-centered traditions, opens a path toward the imageless void which precedes the primordial act of creation (Eliade 37), writing brushes aside familiar patterns and draws us into the dream-time of the Origin, the dark centre where we rediscover the power to weave a new vision of our time and place. The autobiographical meditation which is an essential part of this process will, as it leads each of us within, also bring us closer to one another. "Writing," if it grows from an experience of time which is in harmony with the cycles of earth and body, serves as a reminder of our common roots which lie buried within the darkness of the earth. Pinar, in commenting on this experience, suggests that

> It is as if after one travels for a certain distance in the realm of the idiosyncratic one gets to the roots of that realm, and these roots become what is collective. That is, while these roots are apparently common to us all, they are manifested idiosyncratically. (Poor Curriculum 62)

Today's educator has much to learn from archaic traditions, where ritual was understood as an important aspect of the autobiographical process through which these roots are rediscovered, a link to a primordial experience of time which has today been forgotten. The teacher, LaChapelle insists,

> must help students learn to see multi-dimensionally, because . . . [as modern physics shows,] the universe is a "dynamic web of interrelated events" (Capra), not a mass of unrelated facts. One of the ways to deal with this kind of material is through ritual, as tribal man (sic) has always done in the past. Through ritual, students not only learn from the teachers but from each

> other and from all the beings of the locality, including the earth itself. (157)

Writing of a Place

Fundamental to the wisdom of archaic traditions is the insight that these roots lie buried within the soil of the earth, that an understanding of myself in *time* is inseparable from an awareness of my *place*. These traditions, born of the power and beauty of a particular corner of the earth, necessarily reflect that locality in their myths and rituals. LaChapelle shows how the knowledge of a place--and with it a *mythos* of that place--once grew out of every act of daily life, especially those clearly related to the community's material needs. At the end of a hunt, for example, participants met to recount the day's happenings. Not unlike the evening conversations through which our students relive a day of skiing, the events of the hunt were woven into a narrative as participants gathered around the fire with their elders. Unlike most such conversations today, however, these events began to take on mythic dimensions as the elders suggested connections between the day's experiences and the community's memory of other such stories from the distant past, all of which were closely linked to that place.

> With time, the repetition of particular events became myths. Because the particular events of the hunt are related to landmarks, gradually the entire locality or *place* becomes the setting of a continuing myth-drama. . . .

> [N]ew experiences "are woven--primarily through local geography--into an eternal tapestry, continuous with the myths of creation" (Shepard). (LaChapelle 111)

As the product of a people's encounter with the earth, this tapestry would--like a trout removed from the water--begin to loose its vibrant beauty if wrenched from the soil in which it was born. Revelation, these archaic traditions remind us, must be understood as "a particular experience in a particular place" (Deloria 80), and each member of the community must find for herself the road which the gods of the land have called her to travel. Yet, because they turn us away from thoughts of conquest and dominion, leading us instead toward the dark stillness of our common origin, these gods are able to direct the minds of those who enter their presence beyond the place itself, to instill in them an awareness of the sacredness of the cosmos. For those who have learned to inhabit a place,

> every feature of the landscape, the whole world of nature and everything around them, is encompassed in their regard. The earth for them is not of dust (Genesis 3:19), but alive and a mother. The animals and plants, and all the peoples dwelling on her bosom, are her children, also regarded in a sacred way. Moreover, the laws by which the people live, though from their ancestors and proper to themselves, do not elevate them beyond nature; nor are the gods and habits of their neighbors viewed as abominations . . . . Local cult and

> custom are recognized for what they are--namely, relative, not absolute--so that, although indeed limited and limiting, they may open the mind and heart to the world. (Campbell Inner Reaches 33)

Such an awareness, then, while it begins with a narrow, autobiographical focus on the student and her locality, prepares her to move

> from the limited personal family to the realization of a greater, "cosmic" family. To the extent that the human beings of a particular culture have clarified their relationship with the earth, the sky and the gods of their place, the adolescents' task is made easy or difficult. Occasionally, as in the modern world, it is nearly impossible. (LaChapelle 111)

The student seeking a clearer vision of her personal potential was once encouraged to look towards the earth. Our Western religious tradition affirms the role of an encounter with the sacredness of the landscape in a balanced education. Teachers such as Moses, Jesus, and Paul, for example, felt compelled, in order to strip away the intellectual accretions which were impeding their spiritual development, to seek a personal vision of their place and time in the nourishing emptiness of the wilderness (Ex. 2:15, Matt. 4:12, Gal. 1:17).

Today, however, this fundamental teaching of our tradition has been forgotten. "Living, as we do, in the full apotheosis of the intellectual Sun God's victory over matter" (Sjoo 283), the dark earthiness of our origins has been rejected, the sacred shrines of our place desecrated. With the gods driven from mountains and forests, the tiny remnants of unsubdued "wilderness" have become the haunt of our own inner demons. While traditional Western cosmology emphasized the purity of the heavens, whose crystalline spheres revolve in ceaseless praise to the celestial clock-maker, the earth has, as a result of the Fall, been seen as the abode of the evil angels, rebellious beings who were cast from heaven. As a sixth-century cleric pointed out to a fellow-worker (who had written asking for advice on how best to rid his parish of the last vestiges of paganism),

> For many were the devils expelled from heaven. So some ruled in the seas, or rivers, or wells, or woods . . . and they were all malign devils and nefarious spirits, who hurt and troubled unbelieving people who did not know how to protect themselves with the [sign of the cross]. (in Smith 240)

These beliefs, propagated in the interests of a monolithic institution which was anxious to discourage the liberating potential of an individual encounter with the earth, led to a fear of the wilderness which is with us still.

> With every tree or rock or spring suspect as the abode of a devil and [particularly during the time of the Inquisition] with death hanging over the heads of those who went to them for spiritual refreshment, it is no wonder that all wild places became feared and avoided.

(LaChapelle 45-6)

The fear of such places has, until quite recently, retained a central position in the education of the Western child. In a book which is often read by Canadian high school students today, a well-educated woman who, just after the turn of the century, has moved from a cultured community in Ontario to the still-untamed vastness of the Yukon faces the strength of these fears in her own life, and suggests as well their connection to our deeply-rooted antipathy toward our own bodies.

> I had been brought up by parents steeped in the Victorian Tradition, and early in life they had perhaps unconsciously inculcated in me the deadly fear of two bogies: first, a strange Man who might do dreadful things to me, and, second, The Woods, where dreadful things might happen. Now here I was, surrounded on all sides by vast quantities of both. (Berton 116)

This fear of the wilderness (and, by analogy, of our own bodies) is perhaps no longer cultivated in children as it once was; with the task of the linear curriculum nearing its completion, such places have all but disappeared. Today, with the gods who once guarded rivers, rocks, and trees driven from our land, we find ourselves living alone in a trackless waste, the barenness which we have created around us mirroring that which we now find within.

> Civilized, morbidly self-conscious man's desire to overcome earth, and death, and the bondage of flesh and woman, only creates a vaster kind of death for himself.

> For he has killed off everything sacred, [and] now he must truly die alone. . . . "[W]hen civilized man sets up walls between himself and the forest, and when he sets up his personal name against the stars, he ensures that the now-isolated ego will cry out in painful recognition of its complete alienation in the fear of death" (Thompson). (Sjoo 283)

> Everywhere the world mirrors back to man his own image, and nowhere can he make vivifying contact with what is not human. . . . The city is the literal representation of the progressive humanization of the world. And where is there room for God in the city? . . . Life in the city is the way in which many men have experienced most directly what it means to live without God in the world. (Miller 5)

It is indeed important to recognize the ecological implications of our encounter with a place. As we begin to sense the disharmony which the imposition of an alien myth has brought upon the land in which we reside, but which we no longer truly inhabit, education will once again find its roots in a relationship with the earth.

> Reinhabitation refers to the spirit of living-in-place within a region that has been disrupted and injured through generations of exploitation. It means becoming native to places by developing [an] awareness of their special life continuities and undertaking activities and evolving social forms that tend to maintain and restore

> them. . . . It is simply becoming fully alive in and with a place. (Berg, in Berman 299; emphasis mine)

As the looming collapse of advanced industrial society begins to contribute to the nigredo, the initial catalyst necessary for such a shift in values to occur, the ancient knowledge of our places which has been preserved by their aboriginal inhabitants has begun to emerge as the key to a viable (perhaps the only viable) alternative. These peoples, who have lived for millennia at peace with the earth,

> know the local animal species, the meaning of the slightest shift in the wind, and have a rich lore of herbs and their preparation. Their lives are tailored to an optimum relationship with their particular region . . . Recent research indicates that historically, such people lived relatively abundant lives, and did so with far less work than we do today. (Berman 298)

Yet even as it is becoming increasingly clear that a better understanding of our place is essential to our physical survival, the earth wisdom of archaic tradition teaches that such an understanding can only grow from a relationship, from a dynamic, personal encounter with the temporal rhythms of the earth. In writing of a place, we are indeed writing of ourselves, and only as we deepen our relationship with our corner of the earth can we begin to write of the Self which we may one day become. Rather than the demons which we now project upon our ravaged landscape, we will once again sense the presence of the gods, and among the first to reappear will be the ancient god of writing.

> Thoth, the god of writing, who embodies absolute passage, is also the "inventor of play," the "one who puts play into play" (Barthes). (Mark Taylor 158)

Though the open play of writing initially "slaps us in the face, . . . fling[s] us into the void," it also holds a particular ability to sever the chains of linear time, to point us toward the creative potential of the darkness, and to ignite within us a clearer vision of our relationship with one another, with our place, and, ultimately, with the universe itself. Though it shatters the orderly cosmos of the passive reader, writing points as well to a new beginning.

> This closure [of the Book], however, is at the same time a productive opening. The "end" of the [B]ook is the "beginning" of writing. (Mark Taylor 98)

Implications for Praxis

This study has, as I have suggested repeatedly, grown from a deeply personal experience of time, from an encounter with a fathomless ocean which threatened to swallow up the reassuring temporal myths which had once given my life a sense of direction. Not an autobiography in the ordinary sense, it has nonetheless demanded an intensely autobiographical reevaluation of my beliefs and values. My initial interest in the meaning of time was sparked by the realization that, as familiar paradigms began to seem increasingly untenable, years of education in the linear tradition had left me ill-prepared to seek a meaningful alternative. Yet while it was initially born of an isolating sense of crisis, an overwhelming personal awareness of the disjuncture between official myth and personal experience, this study has led me to a greater understanding of the impact of linear myths on the lives of my students, and has helped me see more clearly the rich diversity of temporal experience which the linear curriculum has arbitrarily excluded.

I have, as well, become more keenly aware of the relationship between time and text, and of the role which our traditional insistence on a closed, historical reading of the stories which once guided us on our journey through time has played in the disenchantment of the world. Our world has indeed been demythologized--in part by our encounter with the openness of time and the apparent darkness and emptiness of the cosmos--yet as our images of the ancient gods have begun to slough away it has become increasingly clear that the official texts which form the core of today's curriculum have little to offer in their place. The noise and glare of our classrooms may serve momentarily to dissipate our loneliness, the media may join the curriculum in imposing upon us their own substitute for our repressed memories of original time, yet the fleeting moments which still offer an encounter with our deeper selves bring with them an inescapable reminder of the repressed void which lies within.

The curriculum itself, its ordered time and text modeled on the Newtonian cosmos, is a potent vehicle for these sterile official myths. Thus it is reasonable to ask how the "transitional" curriculum which I have sketched in this chapter translates into the highly-structured institutional setting with which students and teachers must contend each day. Is it possible, within the confines of a classroom bounded by the walls of linear space and time, to begin to rediscover the creative power which lies in our our lost memories of the Origin? The answer which I would propose is that movement in this direction has already begun in many classrooms, and that, subtle though this movement may appear to be, the walls which surround us are even now showing signs of crumbling under their own weight.

As we move into this period of transition, the shifting meaning of the curriculum (as I have sketched it in this chapter) might be schematized in terms of three moments: passive reading, active reading, and writing. While not intended as a hierarchical progression, these moments suggest a journey from the temporal rigidity and seriousness of the curriculum as I have experienced it towards an experience of life as ungentle play, from struggle with death to a liberating vision of our finitude, from the imposed paradigms of a readable curriculum to the liberating potential of the writable.

In the first moment, education is understood as "training, conditioning, and manipulating" (in the words of Mitrano). Though lip service is paid to the importance of "teaching thinking," deeply creative thought is impossible in classrooms where education is bound by this paradigm. Time, in this moment, is not truly understood at all, except as defined by others: most typically as a quantifiable commodity or a drama of historical conflict. This vision of the curriculum is, I would suggest, rather prevalent in today's schools, and is popular with many administrators and teachers because of the security and sense of direction it provides. Yet ultimately this security is empty and illusory, purchased at an unacceptable long-term cost, both to the student and to her world. There may indeed be a place for passive reading in situations which call for a focus the *hows*; yet while this type of "training" can indeed show us *how* to make a pulp mill or nuclear reactor, it must not be allowed to obscure the need to ask *when*, *where*, *why*, and *whether* we should indeed do so.

The second moment, that of active reading, has gradually begun to find a place in many classrooms as teachers encourage an awareness of the ideological nature of the curriculum. How has our passive reading of traditional texts, a teacher seeking to encourage such an approach might ask, served to limit inquiry, to predefine the range of questions which the student may meaningfully bring to her encounter with the world? Active reading, while it is necessarily, in the present climate, advanced with great caution on the part of the teacher, will eventually lead students toward a more fully conscious awareness of the discrepancy between the closed, linear paradigms which still govern most aspects of the curriculum and the openness of the decentered labyrinth which they have begun to glimpse beyond. Through active reading students learn the meaning of "reading as . . . " (Culler 43f): recognizing the hierarchies which our tradition has promoted, students begin to place themselves in the role of the lesser term. Through the power of reading as (a woman, a child, a "pagan," . . .), the student comes to see the aspects of her inner being which these hierarchies have devalued. Active reading thus entails a critique of the old order, a clearing away of debris in order to make room for further growth. Yet it should also open the student's horizons to an active engagement with a variety of neglected texts, particularly those of archaic traditions which reaffirm the importance of our suppressed memories of original time. As this moment begins to disrupt the temporal paradigms imposed by the linear curriculum, as the beacons which light our well-traveled paths begin to wink out, the student is brought to an experience of darkness, an encounter with the wilderness through which she begins to reestablish her connectedness with the rhythms of the earth which linear paradigms have disrupted.

During the third moment students will engage in an autobiographical search for a personal mythos, as they are encouraged to explore the wilderness and to trust the vision which they bring from it. A few students have, as chapter four suggests, already begun to embark on this path, though for the most part their journey takes place outside the confines of the classroom. Yet it is possible, I believe, to allow space within the curriculum for such a quest to begin. While the level of personal development of each student must be respected, while the absurdity of efforts to formalize this creative "play with death" as an official course requirement must be acknowledged, it is essential as well that educators begin to recognize the potential of each student and to provide activities which will encourage the emergence of a renewed relationship with the earth (balance sports, dance and drama, meditative smearing of pigments, and creative ritual might serve as representative examples). Students whose educational experience has been an on-going journey through the wilderness, who have been isolated by official myths which have no room for their reemerging memories of original time (Lloyd and Meagan might be considered as examples), have a particular need for the understanding and guidance of their elders. Though teachers must avoid offering a map which presupposes the final destination, they should not hesitate to extend their suggestions, encouragement, and support, seeking to create a sense of community which many such students so desperately need, and without which further personal growth is often impossible.

Though the dark openness of time extends into this moment as well, this darkness is no longer seen as a menacing void. As students begin to understand that they can trust their own temporal rhythms, the labyrinth is gradually rediscovered as a place of dance and play, a sacred shrine where our connection with body and earth--the matrix from which symbols are born and to which they must return to die--is reestablished. Through writing, students begin to trace their own path through the shadows of the lunar labyrinth which has taken the place of the broad highway of the linear curriculum. Though the uninitiated wanderer will find herself confused and disoriented, the labyrinth need not be a place of despair for the student who has learned to leave an inscription upon the winding path. This trace of her passage will serve as a guide, both to herself (for she will no doubt pass this way again) and to those who will follow after; those who will, in turn, elaborate and embellish this trace while venturing as well down other, as yet unexplored, meanders.

At the Margins of Linearity

It is perhaps self-evident that this vision of a transitional curriculum is not equally applicable to all subject areas in the present institutional setting. Though the insights which I have derived from this study have resulted in an attitude toward my work which influences my relationship with students in subject areas as diverse as French and drafting, I am not for the moment contemplating a disruption of the linearity which these courses demand. To do so would, in the present circumstances, represent an imposition of my own vision on students who have chosen to pursue studies in these areas. The art and art methods courses which I teach lend themselves more readily to such efforts, however. Art is in itself a potentially disruptive, subversive activity, and students are often able to turn this potential to their own advantage, using this segment of "school-time" to express the otherwise inexpressible. Given an appropriate balance of freedom and guidance, many students begin to turn from the security of familiar iconography (the competent but uninspired portraits and landscapes which often characterize their work towards the beginning of the school year) toward a more deeply personal exploration of the media which are at their disposal.[6]

My work with students thus involves, in the first place, the establishment of an atmosphere of friendship and trust, a climate in which the energy absorbed by their fear of their own creative power (which is very real in a number of students) can be channeled into the creative journey. The first assignments of the semester must be carefully planned so as to put students at ease; their early work must, I believe, be accepted and appreciated in a manner which also encourages emerging signs of a unique, personal vision. The emergence of this vision can, of course, be more actively cultivated as well. Drawing out of doors in the early fall, for example, has shown itself to be a cleansing, meditative activity which allows students to reestablish their connection with the rhythms of the earth (an essential precursor to the search for a personal mythos, as this study has shown). Similarly, though many students initially dislike the stubborn sliminess of clay, the experience of hand building and subsequent firing and glazing or staining of their vessels and figures serves as a sensuous re-enactment of the ancient myths of creation (as does an unstructured painting session devoted to the contemplative smearing and dripping of pigments).

Extremely important to my growing satisfaction with my work as a teacher is the opportunity which the classroom offers to become better acquainted with students, to learn from their experiences of the world, and to share with them my insights as the opportunity arises. Once again, the art classroom in particular offers a break in the orderly routine of the curriculum, a gap in which such a relationship can begin to flourish. As this study has suggested, such gaps are not merely a diversion from the "serious" task of learning. On the contrary, they constitute the *heart* of an education in which the student provides, from the freshness and vigor of her experience of the world, stories drawn from her time and place; while the teacher, from her greater maturity and broader familiarity with the diversity of human thought, suggests the implications, connections, and ramifications, pointing to the deeper, archetypal themes which bind these stories into a larger whole, an emerging "myth to live by."[7]

Yet just as this study has helped me toward a better understanding of my own work, just as it has brought me to a greater appreciation of the knowledge which originates in my students, it has also thrown into sharper relief the importance of the contribution made by other teachers. The natural sciences, for example, offer a disconcerting view of the cosmos in which many writers, painters, and poets have begun to find the raw material for a new generation of myths. A number of science teachers who were themselves educated in a conservative, linear tradition, and who continue to teacher at institutions such as WRA where these myths are fundamental to the official curriculum, have begun to recognize the shattering implications of their subject matter. Aware of both the liberating as well as the potentially devastating impact of research which has revolutionized our understanding of space and time, of the origins of life, of the life cycles of stars and even of the universe itself, such teachers (two of whom have discussed their efforts with me personally) have begun--at some personal risk--to challenge their students to assess the plausibility of these findings and to consider their potential implications.

The margins of the linear curriculum might be stretched much further in some educational settings, of course. Grumet, for example, discusses her efforts to introduce autobiographical and meditational techniques to a group of college students in a teacher training seminar; she paints a clear picture of students' initial resistance and disbelief, and of her gradual success in overcoming these obstacles through the establishment of a firm foundation of trust and understanding (Grumet 150-155). A teacher who is able to take the time to establish such a foundation, however, (or whose students are fully informed as to the experimental nature of the course) might well begin to introduce elements of earth-centered ritual and autobiographical encounter which are becoming increasingly common in workshops for counselors and educators (such as the one I attended last summer).[8]

This study represents a personal journey from the darkness of the hole left by the passing of traditional myths toward a brighter vision of the temporal whole which encompasses both light and darkness. Thus my (admittedly somewhat mystical) view of the curriculum arises from a personal search for balance in my own life, yet it is a search which I share with many other reflective educators, as my study has shown. While it is in some respects regressive, and might seem to lead to an eventual return to the "cosmic anonymity" of the "Great Mother culture" (Berman 302), it points us beyond as well, toward the possibility of a future in which we have learned the liberating lessons of the body's memories of time. Our tradition has, since before the days of Socrates, acknowledged that an education which would teach us how to live must also teach us to die, yet in our heedless obsession with light and noise this ancient wisdom has been forgotten. As the price of our forgetfulness becomes increasingly apparent, many educators have begun to recognize the importance of balancing our praxis, which has too often emphasized a passive reading dictated by traditional paradigms, with an emptying and clearing away which will leave time and space for the student to discover the power of writing. As Joseph Campbell suggests, archaic tradition offers an image of the role of the educator which today's curriculum theorizers would do well to consider.

> In a myth of the Melanesian island of Malekula in the New Hebrides, which describes the dangers of the way to the Land of the Dead, it is told that when the soul has been carried on a wind across the waters of death and is approaching the entrance of the underworld, it perceives a female guardian sitting before the entrance, drawing a labyrinth design across the path, of which she erases half as the soul approaches. The voyager must restore the design perfectly if he is to pass through it to the Land of the Dead. . . . One may understand how very important it must have been, then, to learn the secret of the labyrinth before death . . . (Campbell Primitive 68-9)

If students are to cross the threshold, if they are to emerge from the cocoon of the ego into the fuller life of the Self, they must, as this myth suggests, begin to rediscover the meaning of writing. The task of the teacher, then, will be seen to lie as much in erasure as in disclosure; the pleasure which she takes in guiding her students through the labyrinth of temporal experience must be balanced by her willingness to clear a space so that the student may begin to explore its mysteries for herself.

As the lights begin to dim, as the walls which once defined the limits of our sheltered cosmos begin to crumble, the world which lies beyond may at first seem dark indeed. Yet this darkness, as it draws each of us into an encounter with the primordial meaning of time, will lead as well to a rediscovery of our ancient roots which lie deep within the earth, and toward a greater awareness of the sensuous beauty to which the ceaseless noise and light of our journey down the highway of linear time have left us oblivious.

> Now it's full night, clear, moonless, and filled with stars, which are not as eternal as was once thought, which are not where we think they are. If they were sounds, they would be echoes, of something that happened millions of years ago: a word made of numbers. Echoes of light, shinning out of the midst of nothing.
>
> It's old light, and there's not much of it. But it's enough to see by.[9]

POSTSCRIPT

Six months have elapsed since the "completion" of this work. The events of this interim have shown me ever more clearly that the search for a "transitional" curriculum is, like the educational process as I experience it in my own life, an on-going spiral.

My reading over the past months has put into clearer perspective the importance of the inward journey as a balance to the almost exclusively outward focus of "modern" education. While I have come to an even greater appreciation of the role which the culture of our native peoples will play in this journey, my encounter with the writings of Alan Watts has led me to a better understanding of the latent potential which lies at the heart of the Christian tradition (particularly as presented in his book Myth and Ritual in Christianity).

As I have emphasized (particularly in chapters three and five), our journey must include body as well as mind. It is through the body that we participate in the original mysteries which lie at the heart of all religious traditions, and the important potential of creative ritual which I have touched on in chapter five has been brought into sharper focus by my recent reading of Watts and Starhawk (see bibliography). The point is, of course (as Joseph Campbell suggests in a recently-published interview), that through ritual (understood in its broadest sense, which includes the type of play refered to in chapter five as "writing") myth comes alive in the now of the participant's life.

> [R]itual is the enactment of a myth: by participating in the rite, you participate in the myth. Myths don't count if they're just hitting your rational faculties--they have to hit the heart. (Open Life 35)

Meditation, too, has begun to play a similar role in my own life. As it leads us back to the silence of the Origin in which all myths have their common source, linear time is recognized for what it is: an illusion, a convenient fiction, a narrow shelf which can never contain the richness and fullness of our mythological heritage.

My own early years of education taught me (among other things, of course) the meaning of fear, and this fear has recently been brought into clearer focus as well: fear of teaching a new subject to a large group of unfamiliar high school students, fear of the claustrophobic darkness of the sweatlodge, fear of the uncertain path which lies before me. Yet I have renewed and deepened old acquaintances as well, and have, in the course of numerous conversations, come to a more positive understanding of the role of the teacher. No one can walk my path for me, yet the "teachers" in my life have been those individuals who have shown me that I am not alone, that though the direction in which my path has led may, from a linear perspective, seem to be marginal, even ex-orbitant, stepping outside the well-worn grooves prescribed by the institution is the only means--indeed, a time-honored means--toward a personal understanding of the meaning of living-in-time.

It is my hope that this work will lead other teachers and students toward a better appreciation of an ancient, though recently somewhat neglected, view of the world which has brought a great deal of meaning to my own life.

NOTES

Chapter 1.

1. Perhaps the most often-referred-to use of the concept of "thrownness" occurs in Heidegger's Being and Time.

2. Davies develops the rather startling impact of the new physics on traditional notions of time, space, and the origin and end of the universe. Though I appear to react negatively to these insights here, I am simply attempting to contrast my lived experience of time with the speculations of modern science.

3. I am particularly influenced by Berman's analysis of the rise of the modern Ego. See also Gilligan on this point, as well a readable development of the thought of Lacan by Kaja Silverman.

"Fight-flight": That is to say, a struggle with the perceived absurdity of the cosmos on one hand, and a denial of our mortality on the other. The traditional Christian understanding of death, for example, holds elements of both these aspects: a denial of the reality of death coupled with the promise of a better world which awaits whose who build their lives on a solid foundation of good deeds. (As chapter two will suggest, the deeds to which "Man" is called include the commission to subdue and remake the chaos of the natural world according to the "divine" pattern, hence our urge to measure and control time itself.)

4. . . . .

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.
(Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1817)

5. Berger analyses this notion of human world building as an anxious quest for certainty in response to the perceived threat of death.

6. See Troutner on "school-time." This is essentially an adaptation of Heidegger's "public time" in *Being and Time*.

7. Brandon 140.

8. I have drawn this discussion of the ego from Berman, 152f.

9. A thought drawn from a CBC Radio broadcast from the *Ideas* series.

10. I will be using capitals to emphasize words which are of particular importance or which I use in a slightly unorthodox manner. In many cases, as the context will show, I use capitalization in a critical sense, to refer to a "closed" or "patriarchal" understanding of a given term; the "gods" of

the modern curriculum. (Examples: Text, Book, the Useful, Reality, Man.)

11. On this point, see articles such as Marija Gimbutas' "Women and Culture in Goddess-Oriented Old Europe," or descriptions of recently-vanished societies of the North American Indians such as that given in Theodora Kroebel's _Ishi, Last of His Tribe_. The thoughts which I have begun to develop in this section will be explored in greater depth in chapter five.

12. A sense of temporality, as distinct from measurable time, is central to Heidegger's _Being and Time_, where the emphasis is on an "authentic" temporality which grasps the meaning of the nothingness from which we emerge and to which we must return. The notion of "authenticity" will in itself be troublesome to many readers because of its vagueness. For this reason, I would define this notion at the outset in terms of personal authorship. An authentic sense of temporality is, then, one which arises from the student's personal experience of the world, a "writable" text to which she will contribute personally (as opposed to the "readable", which is imposed upon the student). This concept is further explored later in this study, particularly in chapter five (in the course of my discussion of writing and the curriculum).

13. While the _writable_ text is open to a diversity of interpretations (calling for the active participation of the

reader in the search for meaning), the readable text insists on the primacy of the author. The concept of the readable versus the writable is explored in particular by Roland Barthes. For a "readable" treatment of this subject see Belsey (125f). This important contrast will be further developed in chapter five.

14. See chapter five, "Writing of a Place". This definition of mythology is drawn from Mason 15.

15. As Lucy Lippard suggests:

> What interests me most about prehistory is precisely what cannot be known about it. The new "speculative history" of the megalithic cultures offers a way back into the labyrinth partially closed off by traditional archeology and its fear of the unproven. In this field the gap between specialists and nonspecialists is narrower than in most, since it is unlikely that many hard facts about the socioreligious life of prehistory will ever surface from their burial places. . . . As well as understanding the various fictions that pass for history, we have to be able to imagine a past and a future different from those to which conventions accustom us. (Lippard 3)

16. I discovered Alan Watts' invaluable treatment of time and the Christian tradition after completing this work. Watts, too, develops this mystical understanding of that which I have called the "Origin" in his discussion of the

"perennial philosophy" which underlies traditional Christian symbols:

> . . . so far from retreating into a subjective and private world of its own, its entire concern is to transcend subjectivity, so that man may "wake up" to the world which is concrete and actual . . . . Those who undertake this task unanimously report a vision of the world . . . in whose light the business of living dying, working and eating, ceases to be a problem. It goes on, yes, but it ceases to be the frantic and frustrating pursuit of an ever-receding goal, because of the discovery that time--as ordinarily understood --is an illusion. (Myth 15)

17. A reference from Plato's Protagoras.

18. These entities (Author, metaphorical Father, rational individual) are important manifestations of the Transcendental Signified (a concept to be introduced in chapter two). See Mark Taylor.

19. See Plato's Republic.

20. Or Beginning and End. This reference to our experience of time is one which will recur throughout this study. Influenced in part by Heidegger, this view of time suggests that we live in a present which is bounded by a dark mystery which lies both before and behind us: the past in which we were not yet; the future in which we will no longer be. This mystery, my study will suggest, was once central to our

understanding of ourselves, yet has today been repressed. Though apparently forgotten, however, this original knowledge of time is constantly reappearing, manifesting itself in our fear and hatred of any reminder of the ultimate contingency of our existence. The goal of this study is, in large part, an exploration of the means by which the creative power of this darkness may be recovered and restored to its proper place in the process of education (see my comments on the Origin above).

21. See Daly's critique of positivistic Methodolatry (Daly 11-2).

22. This is true of educational research in general, of course. Like the approach taken by researchers in the emerging field of feminist studies, education is eclectic and multidisciplinary, and draws on a diversity of resources.

23. Reinharz describes her disillusionment, as a young social scientist, with quantitative methodologies which she felt were victimizing subjects and researchers alike.

24. This urge to control is reflected in our technological subjugation of nature, of course, but also manifests itself unmistakably, as this study will suggest, in all attempts at societal self-replication by means of the closed Text. The technological paradigm, as I understand it, thus encompasses the entire closed curriculum.

25. Belsey discusses the ideological nature of the Text (56f

in particular.

26. Many of the points in this section are drawn from Pinar's study on the importance and meaning of the autobiographical.

27. The metaphorical language here, drawn in a sense from Foucault, is parallel to the past/future aspects of Heidegger's authentic temporality. This imagery suggests the importance of seeing within each individual a microcosm of the universe, in which may be found both the sedimented depths of a personal past and the outward-projecting vastness of a lived-toward future, both of which must be explored if the present is to be lived in its fullness.

28. The illusion of "scientific" objectivity offered by quantitative methodologies (surveys in particular) has been pointed out by numerous writers and teachers. A thoughtful consideration of the countless questionnaires circulated by institutions and graduate students will quickly reveal the potential ideological biases implied by the selection and wording of questions. The temporal demands which the researcher makes of the respondent, the aridly official format of most questionnaires, and the lack of any meaningful personal relationship between researcher and respondent, serve to perpetuate myths of unbiased objectivity in which such research is often cloaked. The use of computers to "process" collected data, the impeccable credentials of the researchers, the use of sophisticated statistical tests,

serve to further obscure the ideological motivations behind many such studies. (See in particular the autobiographical account of Shulamit Reinharz who, as a young social scientist, experiences first hand the hypocrisy sometimes involved in such pretenses to objectivity.)

29. Williams discusses this "general sullenness and withdrawal of interest," which he feels is a result of the "dominative attitude to communication" (in other words, a closed approach to the text) which "is still paramount" in democratic communities (303).

30. All participants in this study have signed a release form through which they state their agreement to my use of the material which they provided (or, in one case, request the addition of an explanatory note).

31. "Meagan" has in fact done so, and recently (March 1990) approved my interpretation of her experience as set forth in chapter four.

32. This "friend" is, in fact, my wife. This paragraph was written toward the end of the first semester, 1988-89 school year.

33. The teaching of grammar would seem to be particularly restrictive, yet even here students can begin to glimpse the arbitrary nature of language and the subtle ways in which it shapes their picture of the world.

Chapter 2.

1. As my discussion will show, I have cited this passage ironically, as an illustration of the narrow definition of truth and myth subscribed to by linear thinkers. The "fables and legends" (Lyotard) of archaic traditions have, as chapters three and five in particular will suggest, a truth value to which linear paradigms have too often blinded us.

2. Numerous scholars of Near-Eastern history and mythology attest to the disruption, around 3000 B.C., of relatively peaceful and bountiful gynolatric (goddess-worshipping) societies by semi-nomadic androlatric warriors. Clear traces of the mythological shifts which ensued may be found in our traditional texts, Greek and Hebrew alike. Societies in which the androlatric order prevailed are referred to by feminist scholars as "patriarchal." (See Campbell *Occidental* 21,72; Stone 14; Spretnak *Response* 555; Sjoo 43; Fisher 188.)

3. "Last-days Remnant" is a pseudonym, as is Puente Junior Academy.

4. "Wild Rose Academy" is a pseudonym.

5. Alan Watts offers an interesting insight into the implications of this sword:

> These is doubtless a deep sense of security in being able to say . . . that one has mastered a logical method which can tear others opinions . . . to shreds. Attitudes of

this kind usually go together with a somewhat aggressive and hostile type of personality which employs sharp definition like the edge of a sword. There is more in this than a metaphor, for, as we have seen, the laws and hypotheses of science are not so much discoveries as instruments, like knives and hammers, for bending nature to one's will. So there is a type of personality which approaches the world with an entire armory of sharp and hard instruments, by means of which it slices and sorts the universe into precise and sterile categories which will not interfere with one's peace of mind. (*Nature* 80)

Chapter 3.

1. This paragraph was written at the time of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

2. My definition of this term ("post-historical") emerges in the course of the discussion. This sense of time seeks to bridge the gap which linear time has created between body and mind, earth and ego. While it draws on the insights of archaic, earth-centered traditions, it retains, at least in the short-run (the "transitional" period discussed in chapter five) a degree of ego consciousness which is said to be absent in archaic traditions.

3. See chapter one, note 16, for a discussion of this (admittedly rather mystical) understanding of the Origin.

4. This thought seems to suggest the deeper and darker roots of violence toward women, of our tendency to devalue "women's work," of our fear of a feminine clergy, etc., though a detailed exploration of this question is beyond the scope of this study.

5. As Alan Watts points out,

> it is strictly incorrect to think of the progressive cultures as materialistic, if the materialist is one who loves concrete materials. No modern city looks as if it were made by people who love material. The truth is

> rather that progressive man hates material and does everything possible to obliterate its resistances, its spatial and temporal limits. (Nature 16)

6. This term may be an oxymoron; as discussed in chapter five, it is possible to postulate a post-historical world in which the ego, in the interests of the long-term survival of life on the planet, has been all but extinguished. In such a world "curriculum" as we understand it would seem to have little meaning. I would prefer to imagine a future consciousness in which ego-awareness has been softened and balanced with an equally strong sense of its dependency on and connectedness to body and earth. In any event, my discussion of the curriculum focuses on the shorter-term transitional period (a term which I introduce in chapter five), during which education will contribute to this evolution.

7. Similarly, the inner recesses of the great cathedral (and thus the dark spiral of the labyrinth as well) can (particularly on ceremonial occasions) be reached only be passing through the western door, the direction of darkness and repository of the sacred pool (the font, whose waters represent primordial chaos) (Watts Myth 177-9).

Chapter 4.

1. It must be emphasized that "feminine", "body", and "darkness" are not equivalent terms, though the feminine is indeed, as chapter three has shown, more deeply connected to the mysteries of light and dark, birth and death. Patriarchal religion, in claiming for itself one side of this circle, has rejected the wisdom of the feminine which has the power to bring these opposites into balance.

2. This aspect of my research, which took place on the campus of the university of Lethbridge (in southern Alberta) in July of 1989, was funded in part by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Alma Mater Fund of the University of Alberta, to whom I am indebted for their generosity and open-mindedness. See also chapter five, note seven.

3. Eschatology: A study of the final events in the history of the world, based mainly on the books of Daniel and the Revelation.

4. Though not completely at ease with this section, as my observations of a year later show, I have decided to leave it as is. My original informants, who contributed the material which influenced this discussion, were females who were familiar with the realities of dormitory life, and whose experience is necessarily rather different than that of my

son.

5. The names used in this study (Meagan and Lloyd) are pseudonyms.

6. Meagan's complete poem is as follows:

I Pray Thee Pegasus

Please let me run away, please set me free
to be one of them, let them reach for me.

Let the pegasus whisk me quickly there,
carry me to them in the land most fair.

Let me run wild as the wolves in the night,
play haunting songs by the pale moonlight.

Let me bathe in the soft caress of sleep,
let me hide in the hollow warm, dark and deep.

Let him come to me, my dark elvin dream,
to take me in his arms, time stop or so seem.

Why won't you let me go, you hate me, how
I hate you, I hate you, I hate you now.

Why don't you understand, you have nothing
you can give to make me dance and sing.

Darkness, silence, coldness, stillness, pain
heaviness, loneliness, hopelessness again.

Wait now Pegasus, before you fly away,
tell them I'm coming soon, and when there to stay.
(March 1988)

For the sake of consistency, slight changes in spelling and punctuation have been made in the citations from her journal and poetry.

7. These passages from her journal are selections. The entire journal (from February 2 to June 7) covers 39 handwritten pages.

8. The entire text reads:

Mirror Mirror

Mirror deep and reflection blue,
are you me or am I you?

One be real, one turned round,
Which be witch, the secret bound.

We are the same yet not at all.
As one rises, the other does fall.

One the white, the pure, the child,
one the black, the strong, the wild.

Who will reign when the mirror is broken,
who will lose as the pledge is spoken?

On whom be the call, heaven or hell, a repentant prayer
or a chanting spell?

Each its price and each its reward,
all to do is to choose which lord.

All I must do is suppress the fear,
Summon the courage and break the mirror.
(1988)

9. The complete poem reads:

Dream Child

Our dream child, our silver-footed Queen,
alone she walked, through the night serene.
Swathed in a cloak of sable lustre,
all could reach but none could quite touch her.

Intricate dancing through dew and mist,
her soul, the night so ardently kissed.
Embalmed by moonlight, her mother's caress,
She journeyed by eve, her children to bless.

'Till you: thirsters and hunters of power
set out your lures, trapped her and bound her.
That not enough, you gave her no air,
insult to injury, cut off her hair.

Leave her be, let the silver lady
breathe in the essence of life force sweet.
Save, protect her, the last of her kind,

she who weaves the tapestries of time.

If you dare kill her, our soul shall be bent,
the tapestry she weaves be twisted and rent.
Then where be we as evil runs wild,
how shall we stand without our dream child?

She how she lies, so close to cold death,
see how shallow and painful her breath.
Don't let her die, don't hasten her end,
for in this, the world to darkness descends.

(March 30, 1988)

10. Moonrise

Your ivory face amongst ebony clouds,
a pearly figure, obscured in a shroud.

The clouds disperse their enveloping embrace,
exposing now your silvery face.

So shy and coquette, you gather once more,
around opaque features your sable attire.

Yet hints of your beauty defy concealment,
as your emanating glow refuses to be pent.

Are you captured in the depths or the opposite be true,
your hypnotic charm has lured them to you?

The object of many a mystical lore,
you flaunt and tease, enchantress to core.

I'll unlock your secrets, they're not so entwined,
that never the right key, ever will I find.

(1987)

11. The entire poem reads:

Embers of Fantasia

Tranquility is not yet dead,
for it still thrives in my dreams;
fantasy's real, so frail it seems.

Am I alone or just one of the few,
to harbor memories long lost,
to melt the cold passionless frost.

One spark dying in a realistic world,
guarded embers too far apart
to unite and restart the heart.

Each to die in an aching soul,
death's palour reigns in the cell
which imprisons like a living hell.

Can these fragile dreams survive,
can they be yet found good,
in lone souls so misunderstood?

(1988)

This theme of flight from the coldness of "reality" and toward the treasured memory of original time which precedes the patriarchal division of the world is also apparent in the following autobiographical poem:

My Lady

Dance Lady Alaria, laugh and sing,
oh child of the silver flame,
daughter of the moon fire they came,
Let all exult, let all voices ring.

Let the passions fuse your broken soul
with its heat and skillful healing
bind you, entwine you in the appealing
fashion it designs. Let it make you whole.

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Let the passions fuse your broken soul
with its heat and skillful healing
bind you, entwine you in the appealing
fashion it designs. Let it make you whole.

At last the scabbard for the sword
which has rot to rust exposed. Sore
but now protected, it is lethal once more.
Glory, honour, fealty to our lord.

Gather round, let us pray and fast,
learn the arts of old, revive the past.

(written when told about medieval society; 1988)

The theme appears as well as in the following hymn to the powers of nature:

Incantation

Come now
All powers, which
the night embowers, my essence
embrace, within you encase.

Join with me
This dance, of motions and chants
may our movements
entwine, around the mystical shrine.

Care not I
of pain, for soon
I shall reign, it is I
the fallen who is now the callen.

May the spirits unnamed
and the passions untamed, encompass
and fill, for this is my will.

When the secrets unwind
to you will I bind
for I shall be proud
to don the sable shroud.

(1988)

12. The teacher, on reading my treatment of his comments, wished to emphasize that while he was indeed disturbed by Meagan's negative image of the Christian God, and while he was convinced that he could guide her towards a truer and

more factual image rooted in the traditional text, it was not his intention to impose such an image upon her.

13. The entire poem reads:

Cut Bonds

They captured her and tortured her,
for she followed not their way.
She was harmless but they hated her,
as the night despised by day.

"Teach her, mold her," this they cried,
"Make her such as are we."
And so, they tried to bind her mind
as her body to that tree.

Now some were prone to pity her,
and sympathize her strife.
So in the darkest hour of night
they granted her a knife.

"Cut your bonds and run away,"
they whispered to her face.
But she knew that she's be caught again,
there was no hiding place.

On the morn the people came,
and gathered round to see.
They found the dagger in her heart,
carved in the tree "I'm free."

(March 1988)

14. The myth of Apollo and Cassandra may be found in Robert Graves 263-4. As a punishment for her refusal of his advances, Apollo (pretending to offer her a farewell kiss) spits into the mouth of Cassandra. Henceforth she is doomed to speak clearly the truth as she sees it--as a result of her prophetic gift--but to be believed by no one.

15. Meagan's parents separated when she was four years old, and divorced four or five years later. Both have since remarried. The trauma of separation and loss may indeed be a factor in her experience, though its role would be rather difficult to establish clearly because of the time interval involved. (Understandably enough, Meagan says she has little memory of a time when her parents lived together.)

16. Though I do not wish to deny the possibility that some mental conditions are intrinsically "pathological," my own reading and personal experience suggest that in many cases mental illness is clearly linked to a society's definition of "normal" thought and behavior patterns. That which is branded "aberrant" in one society is, as writers such a Berman show, considered the norm in another (Berman 152, for example). A crisis which under other circumstances would be resolved by discussion with friends, immersion in familiar routines, and the passage of time can, when it is accompanied or precipitated by unresolved questions regarding the nature of reality as defined by the questioner's community, lead to

a breakdown which seems to call for more drastic treatment.

17. This information was supplied voluntarily by Lloyd's parents, whom I came to know quite well in the course of the school year.

18. As Sjoo writes, quoting Bachofen (of whom her comments are a critique):

> Under the moon [equated with Dionysus] the law of matter prevailed, the world of endless becoming with death as the twin of life. . . . But with patriarchy, "Mother-right is left with the animals" and "mortality is restricted to matter," while male "Spirit purified from the slag of matter" rises up . . . "to the regions of imperishable Light in the halls of the Sun [Apollo]. . ." (Sjoo 280)
>
> Apollo frees himself entirely from any bond with woman. His paternity is motherless and spiritual, as in adoption, hence immortal, immune to the night of death which forever confronts Dionysus . . . (Bachofen, in Sjoo 280-1)

See also Sjoo 121 for an account of the connection between the cult of Dionysus and that of the Great Goddess.

Chapter 5.

1. Given that Lisa's experience of school and work in Mexico is somewhat limited, it seems reasonable to ask whether she would have found life within these extensions of traditional Western thought just as oppressive as her present existence in Alberta. When I put this question to her, she pointed out that although she had attended only kindergarten in Mexico, she did work there as a teacher a number of years ago (when she was twenty), and found that the school day was much less structured temporally--and thus less likely to violate students' personal rhythms--than it is here.

2. Transition, that is to say, from the present order--that of a curriculum which is rooted in the inflexible myths of liner time--toward a world in which our relationship with the earth has been reestablished. I use this term in order to emphasize that the desired outcome is in itself a process, not a predictable final product. See also note three which follows.

3. I have intentionally avoided a prolonged discussion of the nature of human consciousness in the "post-transitional" period, as it would seem to be beyond the scope of this study. My discussion shows clearly, however, that I would tend to disagree with writers such as Laughlin and Richardson, who posit a future superman (whom they call "Homo

gestalt") whose life span and consciousness have been expanded by the miracles of technology (though their study is in many other respects rather credible). Berman, on the other hand, postulates the eventual extinction of the ego. This position seems plausible, though he also evokes a middle position which is (from my point of view) rather more palatable (where the ego has been softened by a deeper relationship with body and earth) (Berman 301-2).

4. Kenosis is a term used by Matthew Fox (140).

5. See Appendix C of Matthew Fox's Original Blessing for a discussion of these and other Western proponents of what he calls a "creation-centered spirituality."

6. To an extent, I would appear to be casting myself in the role of an iconographical expert in this discussion. There is certainly at least some degree of tension between my desire to serve as a facilitator, a guide whose task is that of helping students in their journey along the path which they have chosen for themselves, and the need to help students evaluate the multiplicity of images which surround them. Because, as this study has shown, we have been inundated by ideological imagery, the journey must include (as I have stressed repeatedly) a process of clearing away as well as a careful evaluation of the images which surround us. Meaningful images might be selected partly on the basis of their intrinsic appeal to an individual student, though students must begin to see the ideological nature of this

attraction as well.

I rarely hesitate to offer an opinion of students' work, and frequently suggest alternative approaches which I feel might be helpful, though I avoid punitive grading techniques and emphasize that my opinion, though it is a product of education and experience, is but one among many. Where a student seems content to reproduce stale imagery from magazines and Christmas cards, I accept her effort and comment on its positive aspects, while tactfully suggesting that she seek a more personal mode of expression in subsequent work.

7. The (slightly modified) title of a book by Joseph Campbell.

8. See chapter 4, note 2. This was the workshop in "Counseling and Healing Techniques" conducted by Lee Brown at the University of Lethbridge from July 17-21, 1989, a part of a yearly series sponsored by the Four Worlds Development Project.

9. From the conclusion of Margaret Atwood's novel Cat's Eye (p. 445).

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